
LECTURERS AND STUDENT TEACHERS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS' OWN PERCEPTIONS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY OF KITWE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION - ZAMBIA

PERCEPÇÕES DOS PROFESSORES E ESTUDANTES COM DEFICIÊNCIAS AUDITIVAS SOBRE O SEU PRÓPRIO DESEMPENHO ACADÊMICO: UM ESTUDO DE CASO DO KITWE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION - ZÂMBIA

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Abstract: The level of education attained by students is dependent on their ability to understand learnt concepts and demonstrate their acquired knowledge and skills in problem solving as well as their performance academically. This study sought to investigate the perceptions of lecturers on academic performance of student teachers with hearing impairments. A descriptive case study was used as research design. The study sample included three (3) Lecturers and four (4) student teachers with hearing impairments making the total of seven (7) participants who were purposively sampled. Data was generated using interviews and analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis techniques based on emerging themes from the study. The study revealed that lecturers perceived student teachers with hearing impairments as average and below-average performers academically. The study further revealed that student teachers with hearing impairments had mixed feelings towards their academic performance and perceived their academic performance as being influenced by their inability to understand concepts as well as lecturers' inability to handle them appropriately. The study recommended the need by educators of students with hearing impairments to have positive perception towards students in order to instill self-positive regard in students. The study further recommended need for lecturers to adapt tests and examinations items in order to accommodate deaf student teachers.

Keywords: Academic Performance. Hearing Impairment. Perception. Student Teacher.

Resumo: O nível de educação alcançado pelos estudantes depende de sua capacidade de compreender os conceitos aprendidos e demonstrar seus conhecimentos e habilidades adquiridas na resolução de problemas, bem como seu desempenho acadêmico. Este estudo buscou investigar as percepções dos professores sobre o desempenho acadêmico dos estudantes professores com deficiência auditiva. Um

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estudo de caso descritivo foi utilizado como projeto de pesquisa. A amostra do estudo incluiu três (3) Palestrantes e quatro (4) estudantes professores com deficiência auditiva, perfazendo um total de sete (7) participantes, que foram amostrados propositalmente. Os dados foram gerados usando entrevistas e analisados qualitativamente usando técnicas de análise temática baseadas em temas emergentes do estudo. O estudo revelou que os professores perceberam os estudantes docentes com deficiência auditiva como alunos com desempenho médio e abaixo da média academicamente. O estudo revelou ainda que os estudantes docentes com deficiência auditiva tinham sentimentos mistos em relação ao seu desempenho acadêmico e percebiam seu desempenho acadêmico como sendo influenciado por sua incapacidade de compreender conceitos, bem como a incapacidade dos professores de lidar com eles de forma apropriada. O estudo recomendou a necessidade dos educadores dos estudantes com deficiência auditiva de ter uma percepção positiva em relação aos estudantes, a fim de inculcar nos estudantes uma consideração auto-positiva. O estudo recomendou ainda a necessidade de os professores adaptarem os itens de testes e exames a fim de acomodar os professores de alunos surdos.

Palavras-chave: Desempenho acadêmico. Deficiência auditiva. Percepção. Professor estudante.

INTRODUCTION

Zambian educational system has made strides in education of learners with special educational needs. The efforts of Mrs. Isie Hofmeyer, wife of a missionary at Magwero in (Fort Jameson) now Eastern province of Zambia in 1905 to teach the visually impaired and subsequently Ms Ella Botes after the death of Mrs. Hofmeyer in 1910 (Muzata, 2017) were instrumental to establish Magwero School for the Hearing Impaired in 1955 with initially five male hearing impaired learners of which three were Zambians and two Malawians (Urquhart & Jean-Baptiste, 2009). Efforts by the Zambian government to provide education to persons with disabilities commenced after a presidential decree by the first Republican president in 1971, a move which led to establishment of Lusaka College for Teachers for the Handicapped now Zambia Institute of Special Education (ZAMISE), in 1971. In order to incorporate Special Education in the Ministry of Education, intentions to cater for learners with special educational needs were included in education policies. The Education Reforms (1977), the first education policy states that, handicapped children are entitled to education and should receive basic and further education by full time study and that positive discrimination in their favour should be provided (Kalabula, 2007). The second policy, 'Focus on learning' of (1992), focused on resource mobilization for all children in Zambia, including resources for children with disabilities and this led to construction of special schools for learners with disabilities. The third policy on education, 'Educating Our Future' Policy of 1996 later outlined policies and strategies by the Ministry of Education, which include but not limited to; providing quality education to children

with Special Educational Needs and ensuring equality of educational opportunities for persons with disabilities, to be achieved through collaboration with other stakeholders.

In an effort to promote inclusive education at tertiary level, the Ministry of Education introduced a pilot programme for student teachers with hearing impairments at Kitwe College of education in 1999, under the Zambia Teacher Education Reform Programme (ZATEP) and 15 student teachers with hearing impairments were enrolled, with the support from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA),” and the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education Science Vocational Training and Early Education, 2013; Kitwe College of Education, 2016). The college is one of the public colleges in Zambia initially opened in 1953 during the colonial government (Kitwe College of Education, 2018). Providing education at tertiary level in a inclusive environment meant that students with hearing impairments were able to advance academically. However, studies on academic performance of learners with hearing impairments globally and in Zambia have continued to reveal mixed findings. For instance, a study Magongwa (2008) at the University of Witwatersrand revealed high levels of academic competitiveness among the deaf and hard of hearing students, whereas a study conducted by Nonde (2013) on academic performance of learners with hearing impairments from Solwezi and Munali secondary schools in Zambia indicated that 63% of the learners’ academic performance was below 40% pass mark. Similarly, a study by Chibwe (2013) indicated negative academic performance for learners with hearing impairments, whereas a study by Chibuye (2013) reported that learners with hearing impairments were unable to achieve high scores in reading and writing. A study by Manchishi (2015) revealed that grade 11 and 12 learners with hearing impairments had difficulties with comprehension of Mathematics language.

Studies have also shown that educators such as teachers and lecturers are likely to perceive learners with hearing impairments as exhibiting high academic achievement (Bunch & Valeo, 2004; Al-Sartawe, Al-barson & Al-abdulgabar, 2000) while others studies show that learners with hearing impairments are perceived as poor academic achievers (Kopans, 2001; Marschark & Wauters, 2008). The perceptions of educators on academic performance of students with hearing impairments may thus vary depending on their academic experiences with students.

Statement of the problem

Providing tertiary education to student teachers at Kitwe College of Education enables them to have equality of educational opportunities, just like any Zambian citizen, in that education is a prerequisite to one's acquisition relevant knowledge and skills for possible future employment and/or subsequent independent living. However, since the inclusion of students with hearing impairments under a pilot programme in 1999 at Kitwe College of Education (MESVTEE, 2013; Kitwe College of Education, 2016), the perceptions on their academic performance still remained un-established. Perceptions, whether positive or negative, influence the way learners or students are taught and provided with necessary learning support. With inclusion reported to face challenges in both understanding and implementation in Zambia (Kasongole & Muzata, 2020; Muzata, Simui, Mahlo & Ng'uni 2021), this study was therefore conducted to establish the perceptions of lecturers on the performance of students with hearing impairment at Kitwe College of Education.

Objectives of the study

The following objectives guided this study;

- i.** To find out the perceptions of lecturers on academic performance of student teachers with hearing impairments at Kitwe College of Education.
- ii.** To establish the perceptions of student teachers with hearing impairments towards their academic performance.

Research questions

The following questions guided the study;

- iii.** How do lecturers perceive the academic performance of student teachers with hearing impairments at Kitwe College of Education?
- iv.** How do student teachers with hearing impairments perceive their own academic performance?

Literature Review

Academic Performance of Students with Hearing Impairments

Studies on academic performance from others countries and within Zambia have shown mixed findings on academic performance of students with hearing impairments at different levels of education. For instance, a case study by Nonde (2013) conducted in Solwezi and Munali secondary school in Zambia revealed that 63% of the learners' academic performance was below 40% pass mark. The study attributed communication challenges such as limited sign language vocabulary among teachers and learners, differences in sign language among learners, lack of formal assessment prior to education placement of learners and inadequate teaching and learning materials as contributing factors to the academic performance of the learners.

Another related study by Chibuye (2013) reported poor performance among grade seven (7) learners in reading and writing skills. The learners with hearing impairments were also reported to have exhibited poor alphabetic knowledge, and that poor sign language skills among teachers and learners as well as the use of foreign sign language (American Sign Language) were also reported to have had contributed to the performance of learners. Despite the fact that these studies were conducted in Zambia, they focused at primary and secondary levels; hence their findings may not apply to students in teacher education.

In relation to performance in Mathematics, students with hearing impairments were found to experience challenges with Mathematical language and concepts. A study by Manchishi (2015) on grade 11 and 12 learners with hearing impairments in selected schools in Lusaka indicated that hearing loss affected the ability of learners to learn Mathematics due to difficulties incurred by learners to comprehend Mathematics language. The study also revealed that shortage of teachers, use of unqualified teachers, inadequate teaching and learning resources as well as lack of support towards learners with hearing impairments were some of the factors that contributed to students facing challenges in mathematics.

Performance of students with hearing impairments was found to be the same as that of their hearing peers. Erika-Brophy et al. (2012) measured the academic, social, and communication outcomes of 43 Deaf and hard of hearing students enrolled in regular education schools and found that their performance was average in academic tests and similar to their hearing classmates. However, the performance of students with hearing impairments was perceived to have been attributed to intensive speaking and listening programmes to which they were exposed to from a very early age. Early interventional measures to enhance their communication skills are therefore inevitable for their academic success.

High level of academic competitiveness was found to exist among student teachers with hearing impairments at Wits University in South Africa (Magongwa, 2008). A study comprising twelve (12) student teachers with hearing impairment revealed high level of academic competitiveness among the students, despite their exhibition of low social participation. Magongwa (2008) also reported that academic success of teachers with hearing impairments was driven by factors such as commitment to education, the availability of interpreting services, having Deaf peers and their pre-university experiences contributed to the exhibited academic performance. Commitment to education, which is a personal attribute and interpreting services being a form of a measure for accommodating the students contributed to their academic competitiveness.

Another study on assess of social and academic conditions by learners with hearing impairments in inclusive educational setting in Ethiopia revealed that some respondents confirmed academic abilities and achievements of learners with hearing impairments being better than their hearing classmates (Walelign & Ayalew, 2017), whereas in some cases learners with hearing impairments performed low in their academic abilities and achievements as compared to their hearing equals. The further revealed no significant difference between learners with hearing impairments and hearing peers with regard to academic abilities and achievement. Good social interaction between students with hearing impairments with their hearing counterparts and teachers was also cited in the study. Similarly, McCain & Antia (2005) found no difference in academic achievements, communication participation and social behaviour among five students with hearing impairments who had additional disabilities and their eighteen hearing peers at University of Arizona. Based on the findings depicting positive academic performance of students with hearing impairments, it can therefore be noted that some students with hearing impairments are likely to perform better academically than their hearing peers, provided appropriate measures are put in place to facilitate their learning.

Perceptions of Educators on Academic Performance of Students with Hearing Impairments

Students with hearing impairments have been perceived to display poor academic achievement and experiencing difficulties in school communication (Kopans, 2001; Marschark & Wauters, 2008), and that children who may have learnt language/speech fully and later become deaf have different exposure to the environment from those that were born deaf (Muzata,

2020) hence more likely to exhibit understanding of concepts easier. Kopans (2001) found that teachers in regular schools perceived students with hearing impairments to have poor social skills and lower academic scores, despite the teachers feeling of being capable of teaching the students.

Educators also perceive student teachers with hearing impairments to experience difficulties in different subjects. Moores(2001) states that students with hearing impairments experience difficulties in reading which results in their facing difficulties in other subjects. Reading abilities of students with hearing impairments in this context is thus perceived to interfere with their performance in other subjects.

Some scholars perceive the inclusion of students with hearing impairments in mainstream institutions to the promotion of stronger social and academic achievements as well as higher self-esteem. Bunch & Valeo (2004) state that inclusion of students with hearing impairments in mainstream institutions results in their stronger social and academic achievements. Similarly, Al-Sartawe, Al-barson & Al-abdulgabar (2000) perceive students with hearing impairments to generally exhibit higher academic achievements and higher self-esteem when they pursue their education in an inclusive environment. Strong social interactions, high academic achievements and high self-esteem among students with hearing impairments are therefore perceived to be attributes likely to be exhibited by students with hearing impairments in inclusive learning environments.

Students with Hearing Impairments' Perceptions on their own Performance

Hearing loss in learners has been found to affect their social skills, self-esteem, contributing to their loss of self-reliance, serious emotional problems, isolation, loss of verbal communication and influencing their academic performance(Steele, 2001; Milano et al., 2016; [Warner-Czyz](#) et al., 2015). Academically, students with hearing impairments were reported to exhibit positive attitude towards their education. In a study by Milano et al. (2016) on adjustment and other factors related to High School students with hearing impairments, healthy social, emotional and cognitive development, students with hearing impairments were perceived to depend upon complex interactions between individuals and environmental factors. Milano et al. (2016) used data from the National Longitudinal study of adolescent to adult with hearing impairments to gain a better understanding of student with hearing impairments feelings of acceptance in school. Twelve (12) students with hearing impairments were included in a total

of 456 youth participants from across the county and the findings indicated positive feelings and academic grades among students with hearing impairments. Thus, it has to be noted that positive feelings of students with hearing impairments in inclusive learning environment may lead to positive academic performance.

In another study, integration of students with hearing impairments in College and University life was reported to have had contributed to their positive attitude toward their education. Despite other studies indicating that between 60% and 80% of students with hearing impairments who enroll in mainstream colleges and universities failing to persist to attain a college degree (Liversidge, 2003), a study by Liversidge (2003) on academic and social integration of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing students in a Carnegie Research-I University revealed that when students with hearing impairment are positively integrated into college life, they were more likely to maintain a high level of commitment to college education. The study further indicated that additional influence on persistence was due to availability of support from the office of disabled student services (DSS) through services such as sign language interpreters and note-takers. It can thus be noted in that appropriate support to students with hearing impairments is inevitable for enhancing positive integration in colleges and universities.

Feeling of dissatisfaction in inclusive setting by students with hearing impairments was reported in a study by Kebede (2014) which sought to explore the problems of inclusive education on the psychosocial and academic achievement of students at Mekanisa School for the deaf in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The study revealed that students with hearing impairment encountered some social problems related to friendship formation with hearing peers in inclusive school setting. The study further reported that communication barriers with parents, teachers and hearing peers experienced by students with hearing impairment was mainly attributed to lack of sign language on the part of parents, teachers and hearing peers. Students with hearing impairments were also reported to show aggressiveness during social interaction and that they were easily disappointed when their needs were not meet. The students with hearing impairments also developed feelings of not being loved and unwanted in some cases and due to their social challenges, it was further noted that students with hearing impairments were not able to achieve better result as their hearing peers and in that they felt dissatisfaction with their school work in inclusive educational settings. It can therefore be noted that positive social interaction

among students with hearing impairments and their hearing peers as well as good communication is paramount to successful education of students with hearing impairments.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative case study was used because this study sought to investigate the perceptions of lecturers on academic performance of students with hearing impairment in detail, the aim which depicts one of the critical characteristics of qualitative case studies (Heale & Twycross, 2018).

The study targeted lecturers and student teachers with hearing impairments at Kitwe College of Education. Lecturers were targeted because they were involved in the teaching, assessing, marking and recording of academic work for student teachers with hearing impairments, whereas student teachers with hearing impairments were targeted due to the nature of the study that focused on how lecturers perceived their academic performance as well as how the student teachers with hearing impairments perceived their own academic performance.

The total sample size was seven (7) participants divided as three (3) lecturers and four (4) students with hearing impairments. The lecturers who participated in the study belonged to three different departments. Student teachers with hearing impairments who participated in study were in the third academic year of their Primary Teachers Diploma course. Participants were selected purposively for specific qualities of data needed for the study (Alvi, 2016). Purposive sampling, also referred to as judgmental sampling is regarded as a sampling design based on the researcher's judgment as to who will provide the best information for a study (Etikan & Bala, 2017). In this context, lecturers and student teachers were selected because they were capable of providing information required for the study, in that lecturers were involved in teaching, assessing and marking student teachers' work, hence in a good position to provide their perceptions on academic performance of student teachers with hearing impairments. Student teachers with hearing impairments were active participants in the teaching and learning processes, making them suitable individuals to provide appropriate information on how they perceived their own academic performance and the learning barriers they experienced at the college.

Interviews were used to generate data. Interviews allow participants to talk about their views, attitudes and beliefs in relation to a particular subject, concept or idea (Canals, 2017). Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from lecturers as well as student teachers with hearing impairments, because the use of semi-structured interviews allows a researcher to qualitative data by using a set of predetermined questions and the respondents are able to answer in their own words, as well as allowing a researcher to probe respondents based on their answers and ask supplementary questions for further clarity (Easwaramoorthy & Zarinpoush, 2006), and in turn in-depth information can be collected.

Prior consultations and appointments were made with participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Individual interviews were conducted with lecturers at their own appropriate time and the researchers requested to take notes of the interview from participants. Student teachers with hearing impairments were individually approached and requested to participate in the study and later interviewed individually at their appropriate time. Sign language and speech were used during interviews of student teachers with hearing impairments and permission was sought to record the signed conversation by note taking. During the interviews, questions were first signed to student teachers with hearing impairments and students were then allowed to respond to the questions via sign language. Where clarity was required; the researcher provided clarity to some questions using sign language.

Data were analysed in themes. This is because using thematic analysis helps to illustrate the data in great detail based on salient themes that emerge inductively from the texts, and the themes often consist of words or short phrases that symbolically assign an essence-capturing, and/or evocative attributes (Neuendorf, 2019). Thematic analysis is considered most appropriate for studies that seek to establish information using interpretations and provides a systematic element to data analysis which allows the researcher to associate an analysis of the frequency of themes suitable for qualitative descriptive studies (Ibrahim, 2012).

Ethical issues in research pertain to doing good and avoiding harm to participants, by ensuring that participants have the right of choice to participate in the study and maintaining their privacy (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000). Prior to undertaking this study, ethical clearance was sought from the University of Zambia (UNZA) Ethics committee and permission from Kitwe College of Education to conduct the study.

To ensure adherence to ethical guidelines, participants were informed about the nature and purpose of the study, and informed consent was sought before interviews were conducted. Participants were also assured of high levels of confidentiality and issues of anonymity observed during data collection, analysis and discussion. To ensure anonymity of participants, pseudonyms were used.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study are presented based on the major themes guided by the study objectives. The first objective was to find out lecturers' perceptions of the academic performance of student teachers with hearing impairments, and the second was on perceptions of student teachers with hearing impairments towards their own academic performance.

Lecturers' perceptions on academic performance of student teachers with hearing impairments

The perceptions of lecturers on academic performance of student teachers with hearing impairments were varying but generally indicated that academic performance of student teachers with hearing impairments was either average or below average. When asked to describe the academic performance of student teachers with hearing impairments, Lecturer 1 had this to say;

“The performance is generally average because the college has not recorded a deaf student who performed very well in the past. Most performance of students with hearing impairments is average in tests, assignments and examinations.”

Lecturer 1 the verbatim above was of the view that student teachers with hearing impairments' academic performance was generally average, be it in assignments, tests and examinations and that the college had not recorded any student teacher with hearing impairment who had performed very well academically.

The view of Lecturer 2 was that the academic performance of student teachers with hearing impairments was either average or below average as expressed below;

“What I have seen is that most of them (student teachers with hearing impairments) if it is passing, it's either average or below average. Even during graduation ceremony when you pay particular attention, you will find that most

of them graduate with passes. Academic performance is not all that good, they struggle to actually get 40%, the factors maybe the hostile environment, and given a favorable environment maybe they can do better,” (Lecturer 2).

The comment by Lecturer 2 indicates that student teacher with hearing impairments' academic performance was between averages and below average and that the student teachers struggled to attain 40% which was a passing mark. Lecturer 2 also perceived the performance of students as being influenced by the environment and was of the view that their academic performance was likely to change provided the learning environment was favorable.

Lecturer 3 was of the view that:

“Deaf students are weak, because, in most cases you find that they do not perform well and sometimes I tend to wonder why, because their performance is not as expected. What I have seen is that for assignments, tests and exams you find that three quarters don't perform well. You find that most of them for lack of a better term, will be below 40, and you start looking for them and start negotiating, let's do this and that,” (Lecturer 3).

Lecturer 3 further expressed the view that differences in academic performance were sometimes noticed in student teachers with hearing depending on the onset of their hearing loss:

“Deaf students who perform well are those who were hearing and become deaf afterwards, because we had a time when we had the best student in our study area, who was able to speak, it's like he became deaf after he grew up. Apart from that one, the others whom I have dealt with, their performance is not very good,” (Lecturer 3).

The view expressed by lecturer 3 was that student teachers with hearing impairments who performed well were those who were born with hearing ability, but eventually became hearing impaired. Two themes can be noted from the views of lecturer 3, the first one is the description of student teachers with hearing impairments as academically weak and the second one is that students who performed well were those who were once hearing before they became hearing impaired.

Commenting performance of student teachers in assignments, lecturer 2 perceived the performance of student teachers with hearing impairments as different in assignments as compared to examinations as expressed in the verbatim below:

“Performance in assignments is somehow different from exams because some of the work is done in groups, and they (students with hearing impairments) are helped by their colleagues,” (Lecturer 2).

The perception of lecturer 2 in the verbatim above was that the differences that existed in examinations and assignments marks of student teachers with hearing impairments were due to the perceived help that student teachers with hearing impairments received in assignments from their colleagues.

Perceptions of student teachers with hearing impairments towards their academic performance

The second objective sought to establish the perceptions of student teachers with hearing impairments towards their academic performance. Student teachers with hearing impairments expressed mixed perceptions regarding their academic performance, during sign language interviews. The themes that emerged in line with the second objective were; student teachers with hearing impairments feeling of not being appropriately handled by lecturers, and that the student teachers also faced difficulties in terms of understanding words. The responses of students are glossed.

Responding to the question on student teachers with hearing impairments perceptions of their own academic performance, Student 1 signed as follows:

“DEAF STUDENT SOME PASS, SOME FAIL, DEAF STUDENT PASS SMALL SMALL,” (Student1); Translated as, ‘some student teachers with hearing impairments pass while others fail. The performance for the deaf students is low.’

The response by student 1 suggests that academic performance of student teachers with hearing impairments was perceived to vary despite their performance being low. In another response, student 2 perceived performance of student teachers with hearing impairments as good in some cases, as well as fair or average.

“RESULTS SOME GOOD, SOME FAIR. DEAF PASS A-V-E-R-A-G-E. LEARN DEAF LIKE, BUT UNDERSTAND HARD,” (Student 2. Translated as, ‘the results (performance) are sometimes good and other times fair.

Student teachers with hearing impairments get average (finger-spelt) marks.

Students with hearing impairments like to learn, but understanding is hard.'

The response by student 2 above was that differences existed in performance of students and that students with hearing impairments had interest to learn but their performance was perceived to have been affected by their lack of understanding of concepts.

Responding to perception of students with hearing impairments to their own academic performance, student 3 signed as follows:

“DEAF RESULT BAD, BECAUSE WORD HARD. SOME DEAF COMPLAIN ANSWER WRONG, BUT HEAR STUDENT ANSWER SAME, NOW DEAF ANSWER WRONG, WHY? I THINK SOME LECTURER NOT AWARE DEAF CULTURE ENGLISH,” (Student 3).

Translated as, ‘the result (performance) for student teachers with hearing impairments is bad because of difficulties to understand words. Some student teachers with hearing impairments complain that their answers are marked wrongly, but the same answers are marked correctly when written by hearing students. I think some lecturers are not aware of the deaf culture way of writing English.’

The response by student 2 as expressed above was that academic performance of student teachers with hearing impairments was perceived to be bad and that student teachers with hearing impairments complained about the biased making of student teachers work by lecturers in favour of hearing student teachers and that some lecturers were perceived to lack knowledge on how student teachers with hearing impairments write English.

The feeling that the academic performance of student teachers with hearing impairments was attributed to lecturers wanting students to express themselves more when answering examination questions was expressed by student 4 as follows:

“RESULT SOME GOOD, SOME FAIR. SOME LECTURER WANT DEAF WRITE LONG SENTENCE, DEAF WRITE POINT SHORT IN EXAMINATION, LECTURER WANT DEAF EXPLAIN,”(Student 4).

Translated as, ‘some results are good, while other results are fair. Some lecturers want students with hearing impairments to write long sentences and explain their answers during examinations, but deaf students write short points.’

The response by student 4 was that student teachers with hearing impairments were perceived as good or fair performers academically and that they were able to answer questions in examinations using short sentences of which some lecturers wanted them to explain their answers more as opposed to writing short answers.

DISCUSSION

The first objective of the study sought to find out the perceptions of lecturers on academic performance of student teachers with hearing impairments at Kitwe College of Education. The study revealed that lecturers generally perceived students teachers with hearing impairments as either average or below average performers. The perceptions by lecturers imply that student teachers with hearing impairments were perceived incapable of attaining higher marks. The findings are similar to what was established by Chibuye (2013) and Nonde (2013) in which learners were unable to achieve high scores academically. However, despite the general perception of student teachers with hearing impairments being average or below average performers academically, lecturer 3 was able to note that disparities between pre-lingual and post-lingual student teachers with hearing impairments existed. The perception was that pre-lingual student teachers with hearing impairments (students who lost hearing before acquiring language) were perceived to be low performers academically compared to post-lingual students (students who lose hearing after acquiring language).

Perceiving student teachers with post-lingual hearing impairments as better performers than student teachers with pre-lingual hearing impairments may only be justifiable if the age of onset is determined, because student teachers who became hearing impaired before starting school or during their early primary schools days may not perform the same academically, despite the student being regarded as post-lingual hearing impaired. Muzata (2020) noted that children who may have learnt language/speech fully and later become deaf have different exposure to the environment from those that were born deaf, implying that even differences in their performance may be influenced by exposure varying environmental stimuli and experiences.

Perceiving students with hearing impairments as generally average or below average performers may also have negative implications on both lecturers and student teachers, in that lecturers may not put effort to identify the individual strengths that exist among students with

hearing impairments, because it is cardinal to note that differences exist even in the same domain of exceptionality. To students with hearing impairments, being perceived as below average performers academically may lead to their developing low self-esteem and de-motivation as opposed to positive attitude towards learning and good academic performance likely to be exhibited by students in inclusive learning environments (Milano et al., 2016; Steele, 2001).

The second objective sought to establish the perceptions of student teachers with hearing impairments towards their academic performance. The study revealed that students had mixed views towards their academic performance. Despite the different views expressed by student teachers with hearing impairments towards their academic performance, students felt that their academic performance was affected by their inability to understand some words in tests and examinations which made it difficult to understand concepts (see Student 2 and 3). Misunderstanding of concepts may affect academic performance in that assessments such as tests or examinations are meant to establish students' abilities to demonstrate their understanding of concepts or capabilities to solve problems with reference to what they learn in classes.

The findings also revealed that student teachers with hearing impairments attributed their academic performance to lecturers' inability to handle them appropriately. In reference to student teachers with hearing impairments feeling not being appropriately handled by their lecturers, student 3 felt that some lecturers were somehow biased in making students work in favour of hearing student teachers (see student 3) and that some lecturers had no knowledge on deaf culture and how student teachers with hearing impairments express their views and answers in written form. Perceiving lecturers as being biased towards the hearing student teachers by student teachers with hearing impairments may seem to be trivial, but it has to be noted that the perception may have psychological impact on student teachers with hearing impairments and subsequently influence their educational outcomes. It is therefore cardinal for lecturers to comment on wrong answers written by students and explain why the answers are wrong and if students make comparisons to the answers of their colleagues, lectures should provide appropriate justifications.

CONCLUSION

The first objective of the study was to find out the perceptions of lecturers on academic performance of student teachers with hearing impairments. It can be concluded that lecturers perceived student teachers with hearing impairments as below average and average performers academically and that student teachers with hearing impairments obtained below average marks in tests as compared to assignments

The second objective of the study was to establish the perception of student teachers with hearing impairments towards their academic performance. Based on this objective, it can be concluded that student teachers with hearing impairments had mixed perceptions on their academic performance but generally felt that their academic performance was influenced by their inability to understand some words during tests and examinations and that some lecturers not understanding both written and signed communication among student teachers with hearing impairments. The findings of this study led to the following recommendations:

- Educators of students with hearing impairments should have positive perception towards students in order to instill positive self-positive regard in students, which is likely to influence their academic performance positively.
- There is need for lecturers to ensure that tests and examinations items are adapted to accommodate student teachers with hearing impairments at the college.
- There is need to conduct a study to analyse the performance of student teachers with hearing impairments at the college.

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