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# **THE EXCEPTIONAL CHILD**

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# THE EXCEPTIONAL CHILD

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TOWARDS A ROAD MAP FOR SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT FOR ACHIEVING NIGERIA'S VISION 20:2020 <b>Prof. Ibrahim A. Kolo</b>	1
PARENTS AND PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIP IN EDUCATING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN NIGERIA <b>Prof. Queen I. Obinaju</b>	8
SPECIFIC READING BEHAVIOR CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS EXPERIENCING READING DIFFICULTIES: IMPLICATION FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA <b>Garba Bala Na-Taala</b>	15
THE PERSPECTIVES AND PREPAREDNESS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN FCT ABUJA <b>Ndubuisi Sylvester Iroham, Racheal Asibi Amwe &amp; Rufus Olanrewaju Adebisi</b>	22
AN EXAMINATION OF REGULAR TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY AS A DETERMINANT TO SUCCESSFUL INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES <b>Adaka, T. A. &amp; Obiyo, N. O (Ph.D)</b>	33
INFLUENCE OF EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES ON THE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OF PUPILS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT IN ILORIN, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA <b>Ayo Osisanya &amp; Mojisola Azeezat Ahmodu</b>	41
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SELF-EFFICACY AS DETERMINANTS OF UNDERACHIEVEMENT AMONG HIGH ACHIEVERS IN SELECTED MODEL SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA <b>Fakolade, O.A. Ph.D &amp; Archibong, Idongesit Etim</b>	52
EFFECT OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT ON STUDENTS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE <b>Elemukan Isaiah (Phd) &amp; Umeh Calister</b>	63

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEAF STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN INDIVIDUAL ACADEMIC SUBJECTS AND OVERALL PERFORMNCE IN JUNIOR SECONDARY CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION <b>Garuba Everister &amp; Isaiah S. Elemukan (PhD)</b>	71
ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION OF PERSONS WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA <b>Gigina Onyeka Christian &amp; Okoroikpa Njideka I.</b>	81
EFFECTS OF TACTILE MODELS ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF PUPILS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN PRIMARY SCIENCE <b>Dr. R. Bodang (Rev. Sr.), Amwe, Racheal Asibi &amp; Sowemimo, Fadékemi Victoria</b>	88
MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMME. <b>Ali T. Abdullahi</b>	95
EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SETTING IN RIMIN GADO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KANO STATE <b>Abubakar Isah Ibrahim</b>	101
MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN IN NIGERIA <b>G.A. Adelodun</b>	108
ACCESS AND QUALITY IN SPECIAL TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECT <b>Jacob Udeme Samuel &amp; Edozie Isioma</b>	117
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AS A FACTOR IN THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN NIGERIA <b>Daniel Oladipupo Patunola</b>	126

<p>AWARENESS OF LEARNING DISABILITIES AS ADDITIONAL DISABILITY BY TEACHERS OF LEARNERS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT IN IBADAN METROPOLIS <b>Oladele Adetoun Olubanke, Ogunwale Oluwatoyin Racheal &amp; Azanor Friday Ovie</b></p>	134
<p>INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AS A FACTOR IN MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN NIGERIA <b>Ogunsola, Gabriel O.</b></p>	146
<p>EDUCATION OF TEACHERS FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM <b>Egwim Getrude &amp; Opara Uche Eunice</b></p>	154
<p>CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN TEACHING CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN NIGERIA <b>Ndubuisi Sylvester Iroham, Rufus Olanrewaju Adebisi &amp; Veronica Kaneng Gumut</b></p>	159
<p>ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN CROSS RIVER STATE <b>Bassey James Ejue &amp; Orim, Samuel Orim</b></p>	165
<p>EFFECT OF INSTRUCTIONAL AIDS IMPROVALISATION ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT AT SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOL TUDUN MALIKI IN KANO STATE <b>Ya'u Musa Dantata</b></p>	175
<p>THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION FOR PERSONS WITH CEREBRAL PALSY IN INCLUSIVE SETTING <b>Okoroikpa Njideka I. &amp; Gigina Onyeka Christian</b></p>	187
<p>CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGES OF PARENTS IN CARING FOR CHILDREN WITH MODERATE INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES <b>Leonard Tochukwu Ugwuanyi &amp; Okoroikpa Njideka I.</b></p>	193



SCIENCE TEACHER'S PERCEPTION OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION  
FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED IN OYO STATE

**Rauf, Ademola Misbahu**

**201**

OPINIONS ON STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION IN  
ENHANCING LEARNING AMONG CHILDREN WITH LEARNING  
DISABILITIES IN AN INCLUSIVE SETTING

**James Bassej Ejue (Ph.D) & Orim, Samuel Orim**

**207**

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INFLUENCE OF EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES ON THE  
LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OF PUPILS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT  
IN ILORIN, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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**Abstract**

*Hearing impairment is a condition that mostly leads to poor language development, and thereby affects the academic performance of people with the disorder. Due to this developmental lags, this study investigated the influence of early intervention programmes on the language development of children with hearing impairment in Ilorin, Kwara State. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. 100 purposively- selected pupils with hearing impairment from three special primary schools formed the participants for the study, and were distributed into three groups of early identified, early identified and enrolled, and the later identified. Three instruments- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)( $r=0.85$ ), to test for vocabulary skill, Pre-Language Scale Instrument ( $r=0.78$ ), to test for verbal reasoning skills, and Family Involvement Rating Scale ( $r= 0.89$ ), to test for the participation of parents of pupils with hearing impairment in parenting were used to answer the three research questions and test the three research hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance generated for the study. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, Percentage, Frequency counts and Multiple Regression Analysis. A significant relationship was found among the early intervention programmes (age of identification, age of enrolment and parental involvement) on the language development of pupils with hearing impairment ( $F_{(84,439)}=2.18, P>0.05$ ), and each of the early intervention programmes (age of identification ( $F_{(.527)}=.195, p>0.05$ ), age of enrolment ( $F_{(.833)}=.195, p>0.05$ ) and parental involvement ( $F_{(.210)}=.195, p>0.05$ ) had significant relationship with the language development of pupils with hearing impairment. Therefore, administrators should make the provision of hearing screening result a pre-requisite for admitting pupils into the school for better placement.*



**Key- words:** Hearing impairment, age of identification, age of enrolment, Parental Involvement and Language development.

## Introduction

Research in children with profound hearing impairment has shown that hearing plays a major role in early vocal development, implying that children with hearing impairment experience language disorder. Language disorder, according to Stothard, Snowling, Bishop, and Kaplan (1993) is the impaired comprehension and use of spoken, written and or other symbol system.

The disorder may involve problems in the following areas;

1. The form of language that is, phonology, morphology or syntax
2. The content
3. The function of language in communication that is pragmatics (Stothard, Snowling, Bishop, & Kaplan, 1998).

Specifically, hearing impairments or loss effects could be seen in language development of children with hearing impairment through vocabulary, sentence structure, speaking and academic achievement. Vocabulary develops more slowly in children who have hearing impairment. Children with hearing impairment learn concrete words like cat, jump, five and red more easily than abstract words like before, after, equal to, and jealous. They also have difficulty with function words like the, an, are, and a. The gap between the vocabulary of children with normal hearing and those with hearing impairment widens with age, while children with hearing loss do not catch up without intervention. The gap in academic achievement between children with hearing impairment, and children with normal hearing usually widens as they progress through school and the level of achievement is related to parental involvement and the quantity, quality and timing of support services children received (Fred, 2004), that is, children with hearing impairment learn language in different ways depending on the home environment. However, some commonalities exist in language development between children with hearing impairment and those who are hearing, since language is contingent on frequent, consistent and assessable communication (Briggle, 2005).

Additionally, children with hearing impairment who are born to hearing parents generally start learning language later, and with less consistence and less useful experiences. Such children do not share a native language with their family and their hearing loss on average is not identified until their first birthday (Marschark, 2001). Where parents are learning language such as American sign language (ASL) or signed English (SE), with which to communicate with their children, tendency to acquire inconsistency or incorrect linguistic input might result (Kuntze, 1998; Marschark, 2001).

Age of onset also plays crucial role in the development of language. Children with pre-lingual hearing impairment are more functionally disabled than those who lose some degree of hearing after the acquisition of speech (Shemesh, 2008). It can as such be anticipated that early cochlear implantation might result in a more normal relexical vocal

development. It has been opined that due to the onset of babbling and as evidence of the universality and instinctive nature of language, no mute civilization have ever been discovered throughout history, and since language exist in every culture, it is concluded that it must arise from human biological instinct rather than from the existence of the culture (Otto, 2006). Guralnick (2005) defined early intervention as 'a set of services for children six years of age or younger who are at risk or who currently have developmental delays or social emotional problems.

As a system of coordinated services, early intervention programme promotes the child's growth and development and supports families during the critical early years. The underlying premise for early intervention is that children's developmental or social-emotional problems can either be prevented or remediated through specialized services and activities designed to maximize their developmental learning (Baguley, Dais, & Bamford, 2000; Bluebanning, 2004). Early intervention is grounded in the conviction that the first five years of life are a span during which there is unique opportunity to prevent or reverse children's developmental problems and early intervention for childhood hearing loss is expected to improve language outcomes of children, as the rapid brain growth that occurs at this time of children's lives is believed to be associated with critical period during which children are uniquely prepared to benefit from developmental stimulation that is matched to their individualized needs and abilities (Mahoney & Wiggers, 2007). Early intervention services delivered within the content of the family can improve the developmental, social, and educational gains of the child by reducing the future costs of special education, rehabilitation and health care needs; reducing feelings of isolation, stress and frustration that families may experience; helping in alleviating and reducing behaviour by using positive behavioral strategies and interventions; and helping children with disabilities grow up to become productive, independent individuals. Therefore, the earlier children with or at risk of disabilities receive assistance and the sooner their families receive support towards their child's development, the farther they will go in life (Alys, 2013).

Based on previous researches, it has been found that the individuals with hearing impairment experience poor academic performance when compared with their counterparts. This is as a result of their poor language development that was supposed to have been addressed through early intervention programmes. Hence, the need for this study to identify possible early intervention programmes that can assist in enhancing the language development of pupils with hearing impairment, and which will in turn bring about better academic performance. This is done by verifying the influence of such activities as newborn screening; the basis for early identification, early enrolment and parental involvement on language development, as it (language development) forms the foundation upon which good academic performance that leads to effective contribution of persons with hearing impairment to the nation development is placed.

The purpose of the present study was aimed at identifying the influence of early intervention in form of early identification, early enrolment and parental involvement on

the language acquisition or development of the pupils with hearing impairment. Therefore the study tended to:

1. identify the relationship that exists between age of identification and language development of pupils with hearing impairment.
2. affirm the importance of early enrolment on the language development of pupils with hearing impairment.
3. emphasize the contribution of parental involvement on the language development of pupils with hearing impairment.

In order to achieve these purposes, the following research questions were postulated:

1. Are there any significant relationship among the independent variables (age of identification, age of enrolment and parental involvement) on dependent variable (language development) of pupils with hearing impairment?

### Hypotheses tested

1. There is no significant relationship between the age of identification and language development of pupils with hearing impairment.
2. There is no significant relationship between the age of enrolment and language development of pupils with hearing impairment.
3. There is no significant relationship between parental involvement and language development of pupils with hearing impairment.

### Method

#### Participants

The participants for the study were 100 primary school pupils with hearing impairment from three randomly- selected special schools for persons with hearing impairment in Ilorin, Kwara state. The participants were selected purposively from the population of pupils with hearing impairment from Basic 1 to Basic 3. 43 of these pupils were found to have been identified and enrolled earlier, 36 were early identified but later enrolled while 21 were later identified and enrolled. The earlier identified but later enrolled and the later enrolled were put together against the earlier identified and enrolled in this study especially under the age of enrolment and parental involvement. The participants were between the ages of six and 10 years. 79 of the participants were identified between the ages of 0 and 2 years, while the remaining 21 were identified between the ages of 3 years and above. Further, 43 of the participants were enrolled in a school between the ages of 6 and 9 years, with the remaining 57 identified between 10 years and above. 25 of the participants have their parents between the ages of 18 and 29, 30 between the ages of 30 and 41, and 45 between the ages of 42 and 54.



## **Research Design**

The study adopted a correlational research design as the study observed the variables in their stages of occurrence and determined their influence on the language development of pupils with hearing impairment.

## **Measures**

The Pea-body Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), the Pre- School Language Scale IV, and the Parent- Child Relationship Inventory were the instruments used in the study to test for receptive vocabulary, assess expressive language, and assess parents' attitude towards parenting their child respectively.

The PPVT was an instrument besieged by Dunn and Dunn (2007) to test receptive vocabulary for standard English of pre-school children and for brief intelligent test where four pictures are presented and read as a word. The child either point to the picture most closely, depicting the correct word or state the number of correct picture. The instrument was therefore, adapted for the study to test the vocabulary skills of the pupils with hearing impairment in relation to language development. The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.89r using the test- retest method, while being tested on 20 hearing participants.

The Pre- School Language Scale IV was an instrument designed by Zimmerman, Violette and Pond (2008), and was meant for the assessment of expressive language and auditory comprehension for children from birth to age six. It focuses on four language aspects viz-a-viz language precursors; (attention, vocal development, social communication), semantics; (vocabulary and concepts including quality, quantity, spatial and time sequence), structure; (morphology, syntax) and integrative thinking skills. The instrument was used in this study to test the verbal reasoning skills of the pupils with hearing impairment as related to language development. For this study, both the PPVT and the PLSIV were administered together, where Section A was meant for PPVT, Section B was used as PLS Instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.78r was realized using the test- retest method when the instrument was pilot- tested 20 hearing participants on a pilot study.

The Parent Child Relationship Inventory was an instrument in form of a questionnaire designed by Anthony Genard for parents from ages 18 through 54 in order to assess their attitudes towards parenting their children. The items in the instrument were self-report in nature, consisting Sections A & B grouped into seven content-scales as parent support, satisfaction with parenting, involvement, communication, limit setting, autonomy and role orientation scale with four point Likert's scale for response. The family involvement rating scale (FIRS) was then used to characterize the family level of involvement, assigning the rating as 1 for limited participation, 2 for below average participation, 3 for average participation, 4 for good participation and 5 for ideal participation. For this study, 4&5 were merged for ideal participation, 3 for average participation, and 2&1 merged for below average participation. A reliability coefficient

of 0.78r was generated after the PCRI was pilot- tested on the parents of the 20 hearing participants used as a pilot study for the PPVT and the PLSIV.

### Procedure

The data were collected starting from the researchers' personal contact with the school administrators by summarizing the purpose of the research, giving the rationale behind the study and the need for the teachers' co-operation. After this, the teachers' of the pupils with hearing impairment were interacted with in order to get their support and have easy access to the pupils from primary one to three. Having identified the participants, the pupils' individual files were withdrawn through their teachers to get their age, report of Audiogram- to ascertain their level of hearing and when identified, as well as their year of enrolment. The researchers then divided the students with hearing impairment from the three classes into three groups; those who were identified earlier and enrolled earlier, the earlier identified but later enrolled, and the later identified and enrolled. This, the researchers did in order to ease the distribution and co-ordination of the assessment sheets (PLS-IV & PPVT), and arrive at accurate conclusion on the influence such programme as early identification and early enrolment had on the pupils' language development.

Afterwards, the Parent-child relationship questionnaires were distributed to the pupils via their teachers for their parents' demographic information and other responses (in relation to their interaction). At the point of collection, the researchers put each of the pupils' name on the questionnaire received in order to distinguish parents of pupils with earlier identified and enrolled, early identified but later enrolled and the later identified and enrolled. The data were collected through joint effort of the researchers, the research assistants and the class teachers of the selected pupils with hearing impairment (primary one to three). Assessment sheet containing section A and B, where section A was used as pea-body vocabulary instrument to test the vocabulary, and Section B, used as pre-language scale-IV (PLS-IV), meant for the assessment of verbal reasoning skill were administered. Example on how to go about the question therein was carried out for the pupils to follow. The pupils were meant to circle the correct responses in section A, and respond using sign language in section B within 10 minutes, which was done by calling the pupils out, one after the other by the researchers, the research assistants and the class teachers of the pupils. Every correct response carried two marks. Both results were then merged to make the level of language development.

The data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency count, simple percentage and inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression analysis.

## THE EXCEPTIONAL CHILD

### Results

RQ1: Are there any significant relationship among the independent variables (age of identification, age of enrolment and parental involvement) on dependent variable (language development) of pupils with hearing impairment?

Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis of relationship among independent variables (age of identification, age of enrolment and parental involvement) on the dependent variable (language development) of pupils with hearing impairment.

Source of Variation	Sum of Square	Df	Mean of Square	Cal. Value	F- Value	Critical Value	Sig	Remark
Regression	48.906	3	16.302	84.439	2.18		.000	Sig
Residual	18.534	96	.193					
<b>Total</b>	<b>67.440</b>	<b>99</b>						

Table 2: Model Summary

R	R	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the estimate
.852	.725	.717	.43939

Table above shows that the calculated value is higher than the critical value. This implies a high relationship among the identified variables. The model summary contained in Table 2 shows that all the independent variables together explain the influence of early intervention programmes on language development of pupils with hearing impairment at 72.5%.

### Discussion of findings

The findings of this study on the significant contribution of the independent variable on the language development of the pupils with hearing impairment are invariably consistent with the study of Kaiser and Hancock (2003), Rice and Lenihan (2005), and Clark (2007) that effectiveness of early intervention services is related to the effect they have on the way parents care for or interact with their children.



**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between age of identification and language development of pupils with hearing impairment

**Table 7: Pearson Product moment correlation coefficient of the relationship between age of identification and language development:**

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	Cal r - Value	critical value
Age of identification	100	1.210	0.409	98	.527	.195
Language	100	1.84	0.825			

The Table above shows that there is significant relationship between age of identification and language development since the calculated value (.527) is higher than the critical value (.195) with 98 degree of freedom and at 0.05 alpha levels. The null hypothesis is thereby not accepted.

#### Discussion of findings

The findings of this study on the relationship between age of identification and language development of pupils with hearing impairment agreed with the findings of, Yoshinaga and Apuzzo (1998), Yoshinaga and Sedey (2000), and White (2006) that the younger the age of diagnosis and intervention, the better the development of spoken language.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between the age of enrolment and language development of pupils with hearing impairment

**Table 8: Pearson Product moment correlation coefficient of relationship between the age of enrolment and language development**

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	Cal r - Value	critical value
Age of identification	100	1.5700	0.49757	98	.833	.195
Language	100	1.8400	.82536			

In Table 8, it could be deduced that the calculated r value is greater than the critical value at 0.05 levels of significance. This shows that there is a significant relationship between the age of enrolment and language development of pupils with hearing impairment at even a higher co-efficient. The hypothesis was as such not accepted.

#### Discussion of findings

The finding of this study on the relationship between age of enrolment and language development of pupils with hearing impairment supports the suggestion from Centre for Childhood Deafness in American-Speech-Language Association (2004) that

early enrolment in intervention contributes to positive outcomes in language development.

**Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between Parental involvement and Language development of Pupils with Hearing Impairment**

**Table 9:** Pearson Product moment correlation co efficient of parental involvement and language development

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	Cal. F-Value	critical value
Parental Involvement	100	26.890	6.960	98	.210	.195
Language Development	100	1.840	.825			

Table 9 above shows that significant relationship existed between parental involvement and language development from the calculated r-value (.210) which was found greater than the critical value (.195).

**Discussion of findings**

The results of this study on the relationship between language development and hearing impairment is in line with the claims of Campbell and Sawyer (2009), Eriks-Brophy (2006), that parents are a valuable source about their children and their observations and judgments should be included while planning the intervention programme. The findings also supports Caledron (2000) positions that parents who become involved in intervention tend to communicate better with their children and contribute more to the child's progress than parents who do not participate in such programmes. Caledron (2000) retrospectively analyzed characteristics of two families who participated in the same early intervention programme. Among the findings was the conclusion that late identification results in families spending limited time in early intervention programmes. As a consequence, parents of later-identified children did not demonstrate high level of confidence or independent knowledge related to their children's language needs.

**Conclusion**

Communication effects emanate from language lags, as language could be seen as a vital tool for academic achievement across all levels of education. This study has been able to emphasize the influence of such early intervention programme as early age of identification, early age of enrolment and parental involvement on the language development of pupils with hearing impairment.

## Recommendations

- Government should make newborn hearing screening a mandatory programme in order to earlier identify children with hearing impairment.
- Establishment of more pre – school for children with hearing impairment by government should be a major concern. This will help hasten the language development of the pupils with hearing impairment
- Awareness strategy should be created for early enrolment of identified children with hearing impairment from various newborn hearing screening centers among the members of the public
- Referral by the medical experts in the newborn hearing screening centre to established schools should be done as early as possible.
- Sign language training be planned and strategically made compulsory for the parent of children with hearing impairment for adequate language development
- The result of hearing screening should be made a pre-requisite for enrolment by the school administrators. This will enhance adequate placement of pupils.
- A particular period should be allocated for sign language class in all schools for pupils with hearing impairment for better and uniformity in language development.

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