Exploring the Use of Universal Design for Learning to Support The Deaf Learners in Lesotho Secondary Schools: English Teachers Voice

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Abstract : English learning has been found as one of the prevalent areas of difficulty for Deaf learners. However, studies conducted indicated that this challenge experienced by Deaf learners is an upsetting concern globally as is blamed and hampered by various reasons such as the way English is taught at schools, lack of teachers ' skills and knowledge, therefore, impact negatively on their academic performance. Despite any difficulty in English learning, this language is considered nowadays as the key tool to an educational and occupational career especially in Lesotho. This paper, therefore, intends to contribute to the existing literature by providing the views of Lesotho English teachers, which focuses on how effectively Universal design for learning can be implemented to enhance the academic performance of Deaf learners in context of the English language classroom. The purpose of this study sought to explore the use of universal design for learning (UDL) to support Deaf learners in Lesotho Secondary schools. The present study is informed by interpretative paradigm and situated within a qualitative research approach. Ten participating English teachers from two inclusive schools were purposefully selected and telephonically interviewed to generate data for this study. The data were thematically analysed. The findings indicated that even though UDL is identified as highly proficient and promotes flexibility in teaching methods teachers reflect limited knowledge of the UDL approach. The findings further showed that UDL ensures education for all learners, including marginalised groups, such as learners with disabilities through different teaching strategies. This means that the findings signify the effective use of UDL for the better performance of the English language by Deaf learners (DLs). This aligns with literature that shows mobilizing English teachers as assets help DLs to be engaged and have control in their communities by defining and solving problems using their resources and connections to other networks for asset and exchange. The study, therefore, concludes that teachers acknowledge that even though they assume to be knowledgeable about the definition of UDL, they have a limited practice of the approach, thus they need to be equipped with some techniques and skills to apply for supporting the performance of DLs by using UDL approach in their English teaching. The researchers recommend the awareness of UDL principles by the ministry of Education and Training and teachers training Universities, as well as teachers training colleges, for them to include it in their curricula so that teachers could be properly trained on how to apply it in their teaching effectively

Keywords : deaf learners, Lesotho, support learning, universal design for learning

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