

# DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION OF THE HEARING IMPAIRED IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*Education of the hearing impaired in Nigeria had gone through stages of "Darkness", "Twilight", and "Dawn" as in other countries of the world. Superstitious beliefs about hearing impaired people exercise strong influence on public attitudes toward them and their subsequent education. The advent of the missionaries into the area of education of special needs children had been the forerunner of public awareness of the possibility of training and educating them in Nigeria. A great improvement has been made since the first attempt. The increased interest in the establishment of institutions for the hearing impaired individuals is a mark of the success already achieved and a portrayer of future trend toward delivery of sound and quality education for the hearing impaired in Nigeria.*

## **Introduction**

In Nigeria as in most African countries, superstitious beliefs and practices are prevalent. Civilization and its attending knowledge have done a lot to temper these and their effects on the perceptions and lives of the people. In spite of the increasing

knowledge and awareness of the handicap of deafness and the hearing impaired as a group, a great number of people still feel that it is a waste of resources to educate the hearing impaired.

The crippling economic condition of the country has contributed to the degeneration of the willingness of parents to educate their hearing impaired children. In a situation where there are five hearing and one hearing impaired children in a family with very limited income, educating the hearing impaired member hardly feature in the order of the "survival" priority of the family (Alade, 1994). There is no record of education of the hearing impaired in Nigeria before the advent of the missionaries into the country. The hearing impaired were regarded as abomination, a disgrace, omen of ill luck, the result of wrong deeds, object of punishment to the parents and so on. With such negative beliefs and perception of the hearing impaired and the handicap of deafness, it is not surprising that they were rejected and in most cases, hidden away from the society. (Alade, 1996). Missionaries and voluntary organizations played active roles in the introduction of education of the hearing impaired to Nigeria.

### **Some Of The Earlier Institutions For The Hearing Impaired In Nigeria.**

The first special school for the hearing impaired established in Nigeria dated back to 1953. Some of the earlier schools and special centers are as follows:

**(a) Wesley School for the Deaf**

This was established in 1956 by a society for the care of the deaf in Lagos. This society comprised humanitarians. Help was also provided by Methodist Mission's Secretary Mr. Hughes.

**(b) Ibadan Mission School for the Deaf**

This was established in 1960 by Reverend Andrew Foster a hearing impaired missionary from America. In 1974, the school was merged with the Ibadan school for the Deaf.

**(c) Ibadan School for the Deaf**

This was first established as Home for the young Deaf on September 3, 1963 by Chief (Mrs) E.O. Oyesola. The school was later merged with Ibadan Mission School for the Deaf and assumed its present name.

The school operates a residential section for both secondary and primary school hearing impaired students. There is also a pre-school section to prepare hearing impaired children of age six and above with no previous communication skill or who have never been to school. This school as noted by Alade (1995) has since its establishment produced a number of graduates of Universities, Polytechnics, Teacher Training Colleges and Technical Colleges among its school leavers.

Vocational courses are included in the school curriculum. Vocational education in this school includes soap-making, tie-and-dye, poultry farming, piggery, catering and dressmaking.

(d) **Special school for the Deaf, Oji River**

This school was established in 1961 by Mr. And Mrs. A.F.C. Savory, C.M.S. Church Missionaries. With an enrolment of 120 pupils, the school prepares hearing impaired children for the first school leaving certificate examination, following the regular school curriculum with minor adaptations. In addition, vocational courses are taught (Mba, 1991).

(e) **Bendel State School for the Deaf, Benin City**

The old Bendel State Ministry of Education founded this school in 1977. The school caters for the visually impaired and pupils with mental disability in addition to the hearing impaired. The school is a day school and the method of instruction is total communication. It is a special unit in an regular school (Mba, 1986).

(f) **Ondo State School for the Deaf, Akure**

This school was established in April 1977 by the state government through the efforts of Mr. J.O. Adewunmi and Mr. J.A. Adesanmi. They both taught the hearing impaired in Ibadan for several years. The school is a non-fee paying residential institution fully supported by the state government. The school is a non-fee paying residential institution fully supported by the state government. The school also provides accommodation for the hearing impaired students registered in a Deaf Unit in a regular secondary school in the town. Total communication is used as instructional method.

The pupils are prepared for the First School Leaving Certificate Examination. Prevocational education in the form of poultry farming, dress-making, tie and dyeing and so on are included in the curriculum.

Secondary education is made available for successful primary six pupils in the Deaf Unit mentioned earlier

Other earlier schools include Kwara State School for the Handicapped, established in Ilorin by Dr. Gabriel Adepoju a hearing impaired graduate of Gallaudet University, U.S.A. A visually impaired unit was added in 1976 and a Secondary unit was later added in 1980. The School is residential and the Kwara State Government was financially responsible for the establishment.

Eruwa School for the Deaf, Eruwa, Oyo State started out as a nursery school for the hearing impaired school by Mr. Olojede in 1974. It is presently a special school with sections for the physically disabled and children with mental disability. Special Education Centre, Ogbete, Enugu was established in January 1964 by the then Enugu Municipal Council as a residential/day school for the hearing impaired. Curriculum for regular school is followed with modifications to include special subjects such as speech-training, lip-reading, auditory training and manual communication.

The Christian Centre for the Deaf, Onireke, Ibadan is a unique center that caters for both the spiritual and educational welfare of the hearing impaired children and adults. The center is an off-

shoot of Christian mission for Deaf Africans founded in Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A. by a hearing impaired African American Rev. Andrew Foster on February 24, 1956. Its name was modified to Christian Mission for Deaf in 1978.

Its objectives are mainly:-

- (a) To organize, operate, maintain, promote and encourage gospel and education work among the hearing impaired in Africa.
- (b) To train national Christian workers. By 1957, the services of gospel and education had been extended to Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Togo, Chad, Senegal, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Sierra Leone, Zaire, Congo, Upper Volta, Kenya and Gabon. The center also oriented Christian nationals to work with the hearing impaired in Liberia, Uganda, Zambia and Mali (Handbill and information leaflet).

Activities of the center include education work, evangelism, Bible meetings (Sunday schools and church services), camps, youth centers, a bible institute, Leadership Training and Bible correspondence courses all especially geared to the needs of the hearing impaired. The centre's branch in Nigeria in addition to the above-listed activities, provides accommodation for hearing impaired students and workers from outside the city, state and country. It is a typical example of the "Deaf community". The current Director of the center is Engineer Emmanuel Ilabor a hearing impaired man trained in the United States. He has the distinction of being the first hearing

impaired Director of the Centre and he has expanded the center both structurally and curriculum wise. The Centre now has vocational workshops in areas of Carpentry, Fashion Design, Shoe-making, Bag making and so on. A continuing education section has also been introduced to help hearing impaired adults and also to provide resource and support services to hearing impaired students residing in the center.

One common feature of all the primary institutions for the hearing impaired is the inclusion of pre-vocational courses. With the 6-3-3-4 education system, it is possible for a hearing impaired child who is not academically inclined to quit school after obtaining the Junior Secondary School Certificate that is, after the first three years in Secondary School and seek admission into Technical College or any other institution of training.

In conclusion, this paper has only dealt with the beginning of education of the hearing impaired in Nigeria. Only a handful of the early institutions are mentioned which constitutes a small percentage of the current institutions for the hearing impaired in Nigeria. A survey of enrolment of the hearing impaired pupils in special institutions in 1996 shows an encouraging upward movement when compared to that of 1975. Adeniran (1977) discovered that while only 350 hearing impaired pupils were enrolled in 1975, a total of 7,488 were enrolled in 1996. Nigeria has come a long way since 1953. Education of the hearing impaired has extended to tertiary level in the last decade.

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