



INCLUDING LEARNERS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

In a mainstream setting

1 INTRODUCTION

According to the Centre for Deaf Studies at the University of Witwatersrand, deafness is one of the single largest prevailing disabilities in South Africa affecting more than **4 million** D/deaf people, out of whom **300,000 to 400,000** are profoundly affected. For children hearing is key to learning spoken language, performing academically, and engaging socially.

2 WHAT IS HEARING IMPAIRMENT?

Hearing impairment is a partial or total inability to hear in one or both ears and can have several different causes. It is important to be familiar with the cause of the child's hearing loss, if you can.

3 EARLY IDENTIFICATION

Early identification of hearing loss in children when followed by timely and appropriate interventions can minimize developmental delays and facilitate communication, education and social development. Sadly, hearing loss is often only detected on school admission

4 INCLUSION IN A MAINSTREAM CLASSROOM

A deaf learner who uses oral language can be included in an ordinary class. They, like many other learners, may have some additional support needs which the teacher can implement. Hearing loss poses a barrier to education and social integration.

5 HOW DOES DEAFNESS IMPACT LEARNING?

1 COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

The earlier hearing loss happens in a child's life, the greater impact it will have on the child's cognitive development and the earlier hearing loss is detected and intervention is made, the lesser the ultimate impact.

While the most obvious impact of childhood hearing loss is on language acquisition, the condition also has consequences for overall literacy. Untreated hearing loss is often associated with academic underachievement which can lead to lower job performance and fewer employment opportunities later in life.

2 EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Communication difficulties often lead to social isolation, poor self-concept and feelings of anger, stress, and distressing emotional or psychological consequences which may have a profound effect on the child and family.

3 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Children with hearing loss can interact socially on equal terms with children without hearing impairment. This will depend upon their age, degree of hearing loss, time of diagnosis, treatment, and of course, personality.

Some children may feel left out as they do not always recognise subtle cues of social interaction, and are unable to respond with appropriately. That's why the correct hearing aids, tools and techniques are important - but it's also important that people around your child are trained and learn how to communicate.

4 ATTENTION AND INTERACTION

Hearing is a bodily function that only needs an operational auditory system to work but listening is a skill that requires effort. When the listener is hearing impaired, making that effort can be especially challenging. Thus, the gap between hearing and listening is harder to bridge for those who suffer from hearing loss.

6 STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT LEARNERS WHO ARE HEARING IMPAIRED

- An individualised Education Plan(IEP) to help them reach their full potential
- Correct placement in class, circular or horse shoe seating works best
- Brief and simple instructions, repeat words or phrases in a normal clear voice
- Signs and facial expressions where necessary
- Gain attention by waving, knock a table, or tap their shoulder lightly.
- Get down to their level so that they can see your face clearly.
- Provide written instructions where possible
- Use visual aids when presenting content, for example, PowerPoint, blackboard
- Don't talk while you are writing on the blackboard!
- Minimise background noise in the class room
- Find out how they communicate – sign language, speech or both
- Make it clear what the topic of conversation is: Make sure the deaf child knows when the topic changes.

RESOURCES

- ▶ National Deaf Children's society
- ▶ EarQ Hearing loss in the classroom
- ▶ American Speech Language Hearing Association
- ▶ Childline South Africa
- ▶ Oticon People First

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact: Inclusive Education South Africa

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For more information about the *Teaching and Learning for Inclusive Education* project: vvob.be/southafrica



Blindness separates us from things but deafness separates us from people

Helen Keller

"The thing about hearing loss is that no one can see it. Most people are so impatient; they just assume that the person with hearing loss is being rude, or slow-witted."

Marion Ross

Tips

WATCH YOUR MOUTH

- ▶ Covering your mouth with your hands, eating, chewing gum can make lip-reading very difficult and muffles sound.

STAND WITH YOUR FACE TO THE LIGHT

- ▶ Lip-reading is very difficult if you stand by a window or in poor lighting.

WITH THE SUPPORT OF

