Parental Satisfaction and Involvement in the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education to their Young Children with Deafness

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study was planned to investigate into parental satisfaction and engagement in the availability of Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) to their deaf young children studying in Govt. Deaf and Defective Hearing Schools (GDDHS) in Punjab, Pakistan. The parents of 989 deaf young children constituted the population of study. A representative sample of parents of eighty-two children who gave their consent to participate in the study was taken from ten schools at district level located in four zones of the Punjab. A semi structured and open ended interview protocol consisting of three parts (Part 1=Demographic information about children and their parents, Part 2= Parental Contentment, Part 3= Engagement of parents) was employed. The interviews were recorded on audio tape, Afterwards, transcription was made and codes were assigned. Thematic analysis was done and data was presented in tabulated form. Frequencies were run. Major findings showed that majority of parents were not contented with speech, speech reading, and reading identification skills in their children. Majority of them were not involved in teaching to their children due to being illiterate. They had no guidance about teaching to their young deaf children. On the basis of results, suggestions to Punjab Special Education Department were made.

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1. Introduction

Since the decade of 1960, there has been a growing notion about the difficulties and challenges that children with special needs have during the early years of life. Much emphasis has been placed upon the first few years of life as a critical period and time for great learning to take place. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, pioneer efforts (Bloom, 1964; Kirk, 1958) gave birth to the idea that external

experiential and environmental factors could greatly influence and enhance the course of a child's development. In 1965, the national Head Start Program created a new public focus on the importance of early education. Head Start was created on the sound foundations of civil rights advocacy and on untiring efforts of US public and private sector institutions working on early childhood education programs. President Lyndon B. Johnson takes its credit for his endeavours on War on Poverty in 1960. He declared the formation of Head Start in a special message to Congress on 12th January, 1965. His main concern was on the development of early childhood education programs to educate the disadvantaged children early (Hinitz, 2014; Fatima, 2015). Head Start proved a milestone in preschool education. For the first time large numbers of young children were exposed to mass screening programs that had the potential for identifying and perhaps remediating problems at an early age (Hinitz, 2014; Caldwell, 1973). Pakistan came into being on August 14, 1947. The significance of early years education for special need children in Pakistan was recognized in The Pakistan Educational Conference (1947) in the following words: "Children between the ages of 3 and 6 needed attention in special schools. Government might give a lead in opening a few pre-primary schools, their provision should be left mainly to private agencies (p.20)."

The following education policies consisting Report of the Commission on National Education (1959, Chapter: 16, pp.257-259), and National Education Policy and Implementation Programme (1979, p.28-29) stressed on the training and education of special need children. In coming years, National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2002) clearly stressed the equivalent rights, prospects, and availability of medical, educational, social, psychological, vocational education, employability, and placement of special persons without any discrimination. It is also commendable that the training and education of parents and communities to recognize special needs of persons with disabilities was focused. Unluckily, much attention was not paid on educating and training the parents of special need children. National Plan of Action (2006) laid emphasis on urgent identification of special needs and delivery of early services of intervention to young special need children. The term Early Childhood Development (ECD) was used in this regard. National Education Policy (2009) clearly acknowledged the significance of early years. It mandated "one-year pre-primary education for all children between 3-5 years of age and two year specialised training for teachers in dealing with young children". The National Education Policy (1998-2010) openly declared "kachi" as the initial class in schools of primary education, but due to non-availability of facilities, and services, this project has not been materialised so far (Abidi, 2015; Fatima, 2015).

Globally speaking, involvement of parents of children with deafness in the programs of early intervention, and early education in schools is greatly supported and appreciated. Parent and family focused approaches and models (Kirkwood, 2016; Calderon &Greenberg, 1997; Roush &Matkin, 1994) are being used on a large scale. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), reauthorized in 1997, authorizes parents to get involved in the process of decision-making in their child's education. The parents are encouraged to take active part not only in the educational planning but also in placement related decisions for their children with special needs. Congress also emphasized to conduct joint parent-professional training to clarify the roles of all stake holders in the education of children (Margolis, 1998). Many researches on parental involvement with children with special needs have also highlighted that parents play an indispensable role in the teaching of academic, language, motor, social, and vocational skills (Innocenti& Taylor, 1998;Leyser, 1985). Calderon and Greenberg (1993) investigated that child's functioning is expressively influenced by functioning of mothers and coping strategies. These findings were supported by the ratings of objective teachers. Children of parents having better skills in problem solving were rated by teachers as better adjusted and more capable than children of parents with poor problem solving skills. Additionally, socio economic status of parents regarding their children's education and communication needs was positively correlated with the reading achievement of their children. Musselman and Kircaali-Iftar (1996) studied the spoken language development of 20 children with deafness. Out of 20, 10 children were having unpredictably high spoken language skills, and 10 were with unpredictably low spoken language scores relative to the background and training. A

number of variables were consistent with higher spoken language skills, and, one of them was direct instruction by parents. Collected data exhibited that parents having children with high spoken language skills conceived deafness as a challenge to be defeated. Contrary to this, parents having children with low spoken language skills might have viewed it as a disparity to be adjusted. The authors concluded that aspects of family functioning work together with other educational interventions to affect their child's development.

2. Rationale of the Study

A considerable research is available on poor reading, writing, mathematical skills in students with deafness (Akhtar&Inam, 2005 ;Galaudet Research Institute, 2005; Wahid &Ishfaq, 2000;Stinson & Walter, 1997). Moreover, the skills of speech, and speech reading in young children are also not developed despite attending deaf schools for many years (Parveen, 2007; Latif&Watto, 2005; Hart &Risley, 1995). Ultimately, persons with deafness are unemployed, or under employed (Ahmed &Rehman, 2006;Blanchfield, Feldman, Dunbar, &Gardner, 2001; MacLeod-Gallinger, 1992; Schreodel& Geyer, 2000). Keeping in view the graveness of problem, it was conceived to find the root causes in ECSE program being run in Government Deaf & Defective Hearing Schools in Punjab.

3. Objectives of the Study

Parents, being the most important stake holders, were considered to have share in the emergence of the problem. In connection to this, present study was conducted to have a look into parental satisfaction and involvement in the provision of ECSE to their deaf young children.

4. Questions of the Study

The following questions were sought by the study:

1. What is the satisfaction level of parents with the provision of ECSE to their deaf young children?
2. To what extent the parents are involved in providing ECSE to their deaf young children?
3. What measures can be taken for the improvement of ECSE program?
4. How can the involvement of parents in the provision of ECSE be increased?

5. Method

5.1 Design and Procedure

It was a qualitative study in nature as data were collected by conducting interviews with the parents of deaf young children. The population of study included the parents of all 989 deaf young children studying in 34 Government Deaf & Defective Hearing Schools established in 31 districts in the Punjab.

5.2 Participants

A sample of parents of 82 deaf young children, who confirmed their attendance on the scheduled date and day, was taken from 10 districts (Lahore, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Jhelum, Sialkot, MuzaffarGarh, Dera Ghazi Khan, ,Rawalpindi, Mianwali, and Sahiwal) in four zones of the Punjab province.

6. Instrumentation

An interview protocol consisting of three parts: (Part 1: demographics of parents and children; Part 2: questions on parental satisfaction; Part 3: questions on parental involvement) was developed. Six aspects of ECSE for deaf young children i.e. speech, speech reading, reading recognition, writing, mathematics, parental guidance and counselling were included in the interview protocol on the basis of literature review. Part 1 included description about sample districts, children, parents, their age, qualification, profession, number of children with deafness, and monthly income. Part 2 comprised eight open- ended questions. Part 3 including five open-ended questions was about parents' own involvement in and contribution to the development of their deaf young children. The validity of the instrument was assured by taking opinions of five experts in deaf field.

7. Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected personally by conducting meetings with the parents of deaf young children. Initially, the heads of the sample deaf schools were contacted and requested about access to the subjects. Keeping into consideration the daily schedule of the schools, and ensuring the availability of parents, a meeting schedule was prepared. All parents were informed about the purpose of meeting by the respective schools. On the specified days, date and time, the researchers visited the schools. The parents were gathered in a separate room along with their deaf young children. Every parent was interviewed separately. They were also made confident of giving data with complete privacy and anonymity. During the interviews, guidelines regarding practicing speech, speech reading, teaching of reading, writing, and mathematics, and on other deafness related aspects were also given to parents which were welcomed by them. Some of the parents were paid some amount and reimbursed for the mileage to the school. One interview took 40 minutes on average.

8. Data Analysis and Results

Part 1 of the interview protocol was related to demographics about parents and their deaf young children. This information is being presented in the following table 1.

Table 1: Demographic information about parents of deaf young children

Variable	Description	Number	Percentage
Districts	D.G.khan	10	12.2
	Gujranwala	6	7.3
	Gujrat	10	12.2
	Jehlum	8	9.8
	Lahore	8	9.8
	Mianwali	8	9.8
	Muzaffargarh	7	8.5
	Rawalpindi	7	8.5
	Sahiwal	6	7.3
	Sialkot	12	14.6
	Total	82	100.0
Gender of the Children	Male	50	61.0
	Female	32	39.0
	Total	82	100.0
Class of the Children	KG I	57	69.5
	KG II	25	30.5
	Total	82	100.0
Gender of the Parents	Male	27	32.9
	Female	55	67.1
	Total	82	100.0
Fathers' Age	26-30 years	8	9.8
	31-35 years	18	22.0
	36-40 years	31	37.8
	41-45 years	12	14.6
	46-50 years	7	8.5
	Above 50 years	4	4.9
	Late	2	2.4
	Total	82	100.0
Mothers' Age	below 25 years	2	2.4
	26-30 years	23	28.0
	36-40 years	22	26.8
	41-45 years	5	6.1
	46-50 years	2	2.4
	Above 50 years	2	2.4
	Late	1	1.2
	Total	82	100.0
Fathers' Qualifications	Illiterate	36	43.9
	Matric	36	43.9
	Intermediate	4	4.9
	Graduate	5	6.1
	Masters	1	1.2

	Total	82	100.0
Mothers' Qualifications	Illiterate	49	59.8
	Secondary School Certificate	30	36.6
	Intermediate	3	3.7
	Total	82	100.0
Fathers' Profession	Unemployed	4	4.9
	Govt. Servants	13	15.9
	Worker/Labourer/Shop keeper/driver etc.	64	78.0
	Teacher	1	1.2
	Total	82	100.0
Mothers' Profession	house wife	74	90.2
	Maid	1	1.2
	Labourer	7	8.5
	Total	82	100.0
Monthly income of family	5000-10000	31	37.8
	11000-15000	24	29.3
	16000-20000	15	18.3
	21000-25000	8	9.8
	26000-30000	2	2.4
	above 50000	2	2.4
	Total	82	100.0

Table 1.presents the details of demographic information about parents of deaf young children. Parents were taken from ten districts of four zones. These districts were selected through simple random sampling. Parents of 50 (61%) male, and 32 (39%) female deaf young children participated in the study. The reason of this disparity was that the strength of male deaf young children enrolled in 34 GDDHS was larger (60%) than female deaf young children (40%). The number of parents whose children were enrolled in K.G.I, was greater (69.5%) than those whose children were studying in K.G.II (30.5%). The reason of this difference was that most of the parents of children of K.G.I reported that they had been called for meeting for the first time. It is significant that more mothers (67.1%) participated in the study as compared to fathers (33%). It might be due to the reason that most of the mothers (90.2%) were house wives. Most of the fathers were in the age range of 36-40 years (38%), and mothers 26-30 years (28%). The number of fathers of deaf young children who had passed matriculation was larger (44%) than those with other qualifications. Besides this, 44% of them were illiterate which was alarming. On the other hand, a vast majority of mothers (60%) was illiterate and 30% had passed matriculation. It is a matter of concern that no mother was having graduation, masters, or any other qualification. Most of the fathers (78%) were related to labour work, and most of the mothers (90.2%) were house wives. The monthly income of most of the families was PKR 5000-10,000/- which reflects their poor economic condition.

Part 2. Parental Satisfaction

Part 2 of the interview protocol consisted of eight open-ended questions which were asked to parents to have knowledge about their contentment on the availability of ECSE services by the respective schools. Responses of parents were audio-recorded and afterwards transcribed. Common themes were derived and categories were made.The frequency distribution of parents' responses is presented as follows:

Table 2: To what extent the speech of your child has developed?

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percent
Development of speech	No speech	51	62.2
	Less intelligible speech	19	23.2
	Moderately intelligible speech	3	3.65
	Intelligible speech	9	11.0
	Total	82	100.0

Table 2.shows that majority of the parents (62.2%) responded that their children had no speech. The parents of 19 children (23.2%) told that the speech of their children was less intelligible restricted to only bilabial sounds. Only 3 (3.65%) parents were of the view that their children had moderately intelligible speech consisting of a few words of daily use. The parents of nine children (11%) told that their children had intelligible speech. It is worth mentioning here that most of these parents, whose children had got some intelligible speech, reported that they had been hiring the services of speech therapists of private sector, but, due to heavy charges, they had discontinued taking speech sessions. They were now practicing those speech lessons at home.

Table 3: To what extent speech reading skills of your child have developed?

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percent
Development of speech reading skills	No speech reading	65	79.3
	Speech reading of few words	15	18.3
	Good speech reading	2	2.4
	Total	82	100.0

Table 3.shows that most of the parents (79.3%) responded that the speech reading skill of their children was not developed. Parents of 15 children (18.3%) reported that their children could do speech reading of a few words. Parents of only two children (2.4%) answered that the speech reading skill of their children was good. It means that the area of teaching speech reading to deaf young children was being ignored in schools.

Table 4: How much your child has developed reading skills?

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percent
Development of reading skills	Can't read	35	42.7
	Can read alphabets only	37	45.1
	Can read words	10	12.2
	Total	82	100.0

Table 4.depicts that parents of 37 (45.1%) deaf young children reported that their children could read alphabets only whereas parents of 43% children answered that their children could not read anything. Additionally, parents of 10 (12.2%) children informed about their children's ability to read words. In other words, the number of children who had developed reading skill was small.

Table 5: How much your child has developed writing skill?

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percent
Development of writing skills	Can't write	4	4.9
	Can copy alphabets	48	58.5
	Can write alphabets independently	19	23.2
	Can write words	11	13.4
	Total	82	100.0

Table 4.shows that parents of 48 (58.5%) deaf young children responded that their children could copy alphabets. Parents of 19 (23.2%) children were of the view that their children could write alphabets independently. The parents of 11 (13.4%) children reported that their children could write words, whereas the parents of only 4 (5%) children informed that their children were not able to write anything. It shows that majority of deaf young children were at the stage of copying alphabets only. Contrary to this, syllabus of classes K.G.I and K.G.II consisted of alphabets, words, and sentences. Parents' responses on the development of writing skills reflected a wide gap between the intended goals and

children's present level of functioning.

Table 5: How much your child has developed mathematical skills?

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percent
Development of mathematical skills	Can't count	11	13.4
	Can count upto 5	18	22.0
	Can count upto 10	40	48.8
	Can count upto 15 or more	13	15.9
	Total	82	100.0

Table 5 shows that parents of 40 (49%) deaf young children were of the view that their children could count upto 10 digits with understanding. Parents of 18 (22%) children reported that their children could count upto 5 digits with understanding. Parents of 13 (16%) children were of the view that their children could count digits upto 15 or more with understanding. The syllabus of mathematics for K.G.I and K.G.II included counting both in digits and words, back counting, sums of addition, and subtraction etc. The present level of functioning of deaf young children exhibited a wide gap to abridge.

Table 6: To what extent Parent Teacher Meetings (PTMs) are conducted?

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percent
Parent Teacher Meetings	Not conducted	16	19.5
	Conducted irregularly	42	51.2
	Conducted regularly	24	29.2
	Total	82	100.0

Table 6 shows that the parents of 16 (19.5%) children reported that parent teacher meetings were never conducted. Parents of 42 (51.2%) deaf young children replied that parent teacher meetings were conducted in the schools on irregular basis. The parents of 24 (29.2%) children reported that parent teacher meetings were conducted on regular basis. It means that there is need to pay attention on this aspect of ECSE.

Table 7: Are sessions on parental guidance and counselling conducted?

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percent
Guidance and counseling sessions	No sessions	32	39.0
	On parents' request	43	52.4
	Regular sessions	7	8.5
	Total	82	100.0

Table 7 throws light on the organization of sessions for the guidance and counselling of parents of deaf young children. The parents of 32 (39%) children responded that schools were not conducting sessions on parental guidance and counselling. The parents of 43 (52.4%) children reported that sessions for the guidance of parents were conducted in schools on parents' request. The parents of only seven (8.5%) children informed that schools were conducting sessions on parental guidance and counselling on regular basis. It becomes evident from the data that in the absence of parental guidance, required results cannot be achieved.

Table 8: Does school send written material on teaching to your child at home for your guidance?

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percent
Written material	No written material	82	100.0

Table 8 throws light on the situation prevalent in GDDHS in Punjab. All of the parents 82 (100%) reported that schools were not providing any written material (booklets, pamphlets, work sheets, tips on teaching to children) to parents of deaf young children.

Part 3. Parental Involvement

Part 3 of the interview protocol was about parents' own involvement in and contribution to the development of their deaf young children. The analysis of this part is presented as follows:

Table 9: Do you give practice of speech lessons to your child at home?

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percent
Practice of speech	No practice	26	31.7
	No knowledge about methods	29	35.4
	Practice speech	27	32.9
	Total	82	100.0

Practicing speech lessons to deaf young children at home is a matter of great concern. Table 9 shows that parents of 26 (32%) children answered that they did not practice speech to their children at home. Parents of 29 (35.4%) children reported that they had no knowledge about practicing speech to their children at home. Parents of 27 (33%) children were of the view that they used to practice speech to their children at home. It means that parents of only 27 (33%) children out of 82 were practicing speech at home.

Table 10: Do you give your child training in speech reading?

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percent
Training in speech reading	No training	53	64.6
	Effort with no response	12	14.63
	Training in speech reading regularly	17	20.7
	Total	82	100.0

Table 10 presents responses of parents about practicing speech reading to their children at home. The parents of 53 (65%) deaf young children responded that they had no concept of speech reading and resultantly they were not giving any training to their children at home. The parents of 12 (15%) children informed that they used to try to teach speech reading to their children, but, they did not give response. The parents of only 17 (21%) children were of the view that they used to give training on regular basis and their children had started giving good response. It means that majority of parents of deaf young children (79%) were not able to teach their children the skill of speech reading which would have resulted in deficiency in this area.

Table 11: Do you teach your child reading recognition of alphabets and words?

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percent
Teaching of reading recognition	No reading recognition	63	76.8
	Don't know the method	7	8.5
	Teaching reading recognition through speech	12	14.6
	Total	82	100.0

Table 11 throws light on the responses of parents about teaching of reading recognition to their deaf young children. Parents of 63 (77%) children responded that they did not teach their children reading recognition of alphabets and words included in their syllabus. Parents of 12 (15%) children informed that they used to teach their children reading recognition of alphabets and words through speech whereas the parents of seven (8.5%) children reported that they did not know how to teach reading recognition to their deaf young children. It shows that parents of only 12 (15%) children were helping their children in

developing reading recognition skill. Contrary to this, parents of 70 (85%) deaf young children were not contributing to the development of reading skills in their children.

Table 12: Do you teach your child writing of alphabets and words?

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percent
Teaching of writing	No training	11	13.4
	Supervising in doing home work	54	65.9
	Giving practice in writing	17	20.7
	Total	82	100.0

Table 12 presents the responses of parents of deaf young children about teaching of writing skills to their deaf young children. The parents of 11 (13.4) children expressed their inability in teaching writing of alphabets and words to their children. Parents of 54 (66%) children reported that their involvement was restricted only to supervising their children during doing their home work. Parents of 17 (21%) children were of the view that they used to practice writing of alphabets and words to their children. It means that majority of the parents were involved in guiding their children just in completing their home work. Extra efforts were being made by parents of only 17 (21%) deaf young children.

Table 13: Do you teach your child mathematics at home?

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percent
Teaching of mathematics	No teaching of mathematics	16	19.5
	Supervising in doing home work	44	53.7
	Teaching with material	22	26.8
	Total	82	100.0

Table 13 shows that parents of 16 (20%) children expressed their inability in teaching mathematics to their children. Parents of 44 (54%) deaf young children used to supervise them in doing their mathematics home work. The parents of 22 (27%) children were teaching them mathematical concepts with the help of material. In other words, most of the parents showed their involvement in teaching mathematics to their children.

9. Discussion

This research study examined the parental satisfaction on and involvement in the major aspects (speech, speech reading, reading, writing, mathematics, and guidance and counselling) of ECSE for their deaf young children. Individuals with Disabilities Education act (IDEA), reauthorized in 1997, has given parents the right to indulge in the planning of individual educational plan, and placement decision for their children with disabilities. One of the key themes of the 1997 amendments to the act is emphasis on parent involvement in the provision of special education to their children with special needs. In congruence to this, National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2002), a first ever policy of its kind in Pakistan, has stressed the training of parents for the education of their special needs children. Contrary to this, the data taken from the parents highlights that parental involvement in the education of their deaf young children was not on satisfactory level. Moreover, Parent Teacher Meetings (PTMs), and guidance & counselling sessions were being conducted on a very limited scale. It shows that National Plan of Action, 2006, which was formulated for the implementation of National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2002), is not very successful in enforcing the policy deliberations in its true spirit.

Musselman and Kircaali-Iftar (1996) found that children with unpredictably high spoken language skills were those whose parents were directly engaged in their studies. In consistent to this, the present study represents that parents of deaf young children were not involved on a large scale in teaching to their

children due to being unfamiliar with the instructional methods. As a result, their children were not exhibiting better performance in academics. Here, the performance of deaf schools is also questionable which are not making arrangements for the involvement and training of parents in the educational process of their deaf young children (Humphries, Kushalnagar, Mathur, Napoli, Rathmann and Smith, 2019).

Calderon and Greenberg (1993) and Calderon, Greenberg, and Kusche (1991) reported that maternal functioning and coping factors significantly affect a child's functioning. Additionally, socio economic status of parents was positively correlated with their deaf children's reading achievement. These findings are consistent with those of the present study which highlights poor socio economic status of parents, especially, of mothers who represent higher rate (60%) of illiteracy. The remaining 37% had passed Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C.) Exam, and only 4% had the qualification of Intermediate. There was not even a single mother with college or university education. As a result, the deaf young children were lagging behind in developing speech, speech reading, reading recognition, writing, and mathematical skills.

Irrespective of the parental engagement in the education of their deaf young children, their satisfaction on the provision of academic support extended by the schools does matter. As reported by them in interviews, it is evident that deaf young children (62%) were having no speech, and only 11% children had developed intelligible speech. Similarly, 79% children had not developed speech reading skill, whereas, only 2% children had learnt good speech reading. In addition to this, only 12% children could have read words and 13% could have write words included in their syllabus. As far as mathematical skills are concerned, only 16% children could count upto 15 or more with understanding. The academic level of children reported by their parents poses a question mark on the performance of schools because as compared to the prescribed syllabus, the achievement level of children, as reported by their parents is very low.

10. Implications of the Study

On the basis of data collected from parents in the form of interviews, results, and points considered in the discussion portion, the following points are worth mentioning:

1. The study has serious implications regarding the performance of schools for deaf children as parents of deaf young children are not satisfied with the services provided to their children. As the speech related skills of deaf young children are not developed, it is imperative to focus on these areas through employing speech therapists, and monitoring their performance according to a set pattern.
2. As parents are not satisfied with the academic condition of their children, teachers' instructional practices need to be improved. Refresher courses pertaining to the areas of ECSE, should be conducted.
3. Training courses for parents on speech, speech reading, teaching of reading, writing, and mathematics need to be organized through arranging the payment for travelling and daily allowances.
4. For the guidance of parents, sessions should be conducted on regular basis.
5. As the parents are having low socio economic status, reimbursement for mileage should be made when they are invited for Parent Teacher Meetings or guidance and counselling sessions.
6. To reduce illiteracy rates among mothers, adult literacy enhancement campaigns should be launched by the Ministry of Education and Special Education which will ultimately bring about change in the academic condition of deaf young children.

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