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**TEACHER EDUCATION FOR INCLUSION? PERCEPTIONS OF
TEACHER EDUCATORS TOWARDS THE TEACHING OF SIGN
LANGUAGE IN PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION COLLEGES IN
UGANDA.**

Abstract:

There is now increased advocacy for the policy and practice of inclusion in education world-wide. This global agenda has necessitated that pre-service teacher education programmes provide training in special needs and inclusive education. Among the aspects that are expected to be taught to teacher trainees is sign language, a skill which trainees ought to have in order to teach children who are deaf. Underlying the advocacy for pre-service teacher training in sign language is also the assumption that teacher educators have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary for supporting teacher trainees to acquire competence in that language. Some studies, however, indicate that this is not necessarily the case. The study reported in this paper explored the perceptions of teacher educators in Uganda towards the teaching of sign language in pre-service teacher education colleges. A qualitative approach was followed and data was collected using questionnaires and interviews with teacher educators who are assigned the responsibility of implementing the special needs and inclusive education training in the colleges. The findings indicate that some teacher educators perceived the training in sign language as an important venture towards the education of children who are deaf. However, it was also noted that some of the teacher trainers perceived themselves as incompetent to implement the sign language training, and that inadequacies in the teacher education syllabus and instructional materials hinder them from supporting pre-service teacher trainees to acquire skills in sign language. The implication of the findings is twofold; First, is that in order to support the teacher trainees to implement special needs and inclusive education, teacher educators need refresher training that might enable them to acquire skills in sign language. Second, is that there is need to review the syllabus and instructional materials for the special needs and inclusive education course in a way that may enable teacher trainees to develop competencies for communication with children who are deaf.

Keywords:

Inclusive education, Teacher educators, sign language

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