

CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

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1.0.0: INTRODUCTION

1.1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This study explores the experiences of hearing-impaired students who has chosen and also forced to study through online medium due to circumstances. Online education, also referred to as distance learning, e-learning, distance education, online learning, or computer-mediated learning, refers to “the application of telecommunications and electronic devices that enable learners to receive instruction that originates from some distant location” (Ellis, 2008, p. 22). Many researchers have argued that online education provides instruction to students for whom traditional classroom instruction is inaccessible due to difficulties such as living long geographical distances from schools, colleges and universities, time commitment to families, lack of transportation, professional obligations, disabilities, or other issues.

According to Allen and Seaman, for a course to be defined as online education, at least 80% of its content must be delivered electronically. Burns argued that online education is growing because of the flexibility of its modes of instruction. Flexibility is often cited as an advantage of online education, along with other factors, such as increased student interaction, less intimidation by peers due and fewer difficulties related to social or socioeconomic status.

The last two decades of the twentieth century marked significant growth in higher education institutions, particularly in online education, as facilitated by increased use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This is especially apparent in the widespread use of the Internet for delivering academic course content and library resources. However, the use of ICT has not been limited to academia. A growing number of online learning programs have enabled training organizations, industries, government facilities, libraries, and international organizations to maximize educational resources.

enrich instructors' pedagogical methodology, enhance revenue, benefit learners, and maintain a competitive edge. The internet has facilitated online education reaching "maturity as a learning method" and any further developments are sure to evolve "alongside the technology that made it possible" (Conde, Muñoz, & García, 2008, p. 61). In other words, online education is only limited by the limitations of technology used to deliver it.

It is apparent that new technologies have challenged the idea that students should only learn in a traditional classroom setting (Toffler, 1991), which is particularly viewed as true for hard-of-hearing students. Deaf college students in the country are a continuously growing population. It should be noted that in the deaf community, the term "Deaf" (with a capital D) indicates a cultural group of individuals with shared experiences and the term "deaf" (with a lowercase d) indicates impaired auditory function or hearing loss.

The current study explores the lived experiences of hard-of-hearing online higher secondary school students, by investigating how these students and their instructors are affected by the online learning environment. The study focuses on the influence of online teaching tools, on the overall writing and reading skills of deaf students, the development of English literacy of deaf students and their academic performance through online learning.

1.2.0 NEED AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The continuing advancements of ICT have had an enormous impact on educational institutions throughout the developed and developing world (International Telecommunication Union [ITU], 2009). From the mid-twentieth century onward, the repositioning and expansion of technological advancements have catered to the growing demand for technology-based solutions (Samaras, Freese, Kosnick, & Beck, 2008). As previously established, one significant development was the growth of online education. In online education, teachers have access to rapidly evolving electronic capabilities that do not require students to be physically present in traditional classrooms to experience learning. The development of ICT has increased the expansion of education delivery methods in online education. In some disciplines, online education can provide a more appropriate curriculum.

lower the cost of operations for both students and schools, and diversify the reach of educators to a global audience. These are all far beyond what could be achieved in a traditional classroom (Allen & Seaman, 2007; Hebert, 2007; Unal, 2005). Educators have also adopted the use of ICT to facilitate remote educational opportunities for populations that had been underserved in the past due to cultural differences, particularly in ethnicity and language, physical distance, or a disability. Thus, online education can provide access for students who cannot attend traditional schools. A traditional school, in this sense, refers to institutions that follow the conventional format of education in which the instructor and student interact face-to-face. Online education has a different format in which instructors can transfer knowledge over a distance to the learners via computer or video conferencing, the Internet, DVD, intranet/extranet, satellite broadcast, interactive television, or a combination of these and other electronic methods. Over the past 10 years, there has been “explosive growth in the delivery of online courses and a growing competition among colleges and universities to expand into this market” (Ruhe & Zumbo, 2009, p.4). University administrators of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have realized the opportunities afforded by incorporating online learning programs into existing educational structures, and the imperative nature of developing new programs and responding to marketing opportunities is significant (Evans, Haughey, & Murphy, 2008). As a result, many universities have made “substantial financial investments in learning technologies and students expect that learning technology will be a key component of their education” (Academic Committee for the Creative Use of Learning Technologies, 2000, p. 5)

Learners’ expectations and perceptions of online education typically have a direct impact on outcomes. Howland and Moore (2002) suggested that the primary attributes related to learners’ ability to succeed in an online program are self-management and self-reliance. In the online learning context, self-management involves properly allocating time and financial resources, while self-reliance denotes the ability and inner drive that propels a learner towards discovery of knowledge based on the foundational content given. The degree to which learners possess these qualities is visible through their innovations

and discovery of better ways of accomplishing tasks before they are taught. Students with goal-oriented approaches to online learning achieve higher academic performance than those with different focuses (Terrell, 2005).

Of course, one of the challenges in online education is that students who do not possess these qualities may find online education to be difficult (Terrell, 2005). Furthermore, online learning students may find it difficult to contribute to class discussions in an online course and, further, may discover that online classes require significant changes in their mode of learning and retention of knowledge. Students have also expressed concerns about isolation, limited access to library resources, technology problems, and inflexible instructors, all of which can create negative experiences for students. At the same time, the emergence of online education programmes have provided students with the opportunity to earn college degrees without stepping inside physical classrooms. Venturing into the online learning environment can create optimistic expectations for students if they perceive there will be flexibility in interacting with tutors and instructors (Howland & Moore, 2002). Clearly, students' perceptions and awareness of the demands of online education are important. This paper will refer to all of the study participants as hearing impaired as a form of respect for each student who is part of the deaf community and culture. The term "deaf" will only be utilized when referring to auditory ability and does not reflect the deaf community or cultural views. Padden and Humphries (1988) define hard of hearing people as those "who walk a thin line between being deaf people who can be like hearing, and deaf people who are too much like hearing people"(p. 50). In general, the term "Deaf" is also used as a collective term for individuals with hearing impairment or loss regardless of the degree. There are recent improvements made for deaf students' access to information in traditional postsecondary settings through the use or variation of technologies. The Internet, instant messaging, cellular phones, text messaging, and videophones are some of the technological advancements that make communication fast and effortless. With the continuously evolving advances within the educational technology realm, the limitations of online instruction appear minimal. Challenges remain in the utilization and adaptation of new

technologies for use in secondary educational settings. In an online secondary education environment, students as of yet do not benefit from full access to information. While postsecondary deaf students observe and participate in online discussions, chat rooms, and emails, there is a lack of interpretation of the deaf community's lived experiences and perceptions of online learning. Two essential problems in the education of deaf individuals explain their cognitive deficiencies and delays; one is the difficulty of communication, considering the divided attention, and the other is the impact of hearing loss on communication with hearing students, who perform a prominent function in the cognitive development of their deaf peers. In this case, merely administering tests to deaf students in order to identify the degree of their hearing loss that affects their learning and cognition does not suffice. It is also important to analyse how the hearing students are going to teach the deaf individuals and examine the quality of the communication utilized.

It is imperative for schools to consider the different needs of deaf students. Through the relationship between professors and students who speak the same language and experience the same culture behind it, deaf students learn, assimilate, and develop with better performance. It will be beneficial to describe and compare the opinions of the deaf students who study in the mainstream classroom and of those who study in bilingual schools or bilingual serial rooms. In an attempt to help hearing students understand the injustice and suffering that the deaf individuals experience in the mainstream classroom, the situation of inequality in the lives of the deaf individuals in the schools needs to be investigated (Marschark, Lang, & Albertini, 2001).

As far as hearing impaired students are concerned, the educational system does not seem to comply with communication standards of model classrooms in mainstream schools. This appears to be discriminatory (Marschark et al., 2001). The inclusion of hearing-impaired students in the mainstream classroom does not actually include the hearing-impaired students, since they have a different language. It is necessary that professors of both deaf and hearing students know Sign Language. The fact that interpreters are utilized does not guarantee an effective education for deaf individuals (Lang, McKee, & Conner, 1993). In mainstream classrooms that include hearing impaired

students, the professors tend not to concern themselves about the hearing-impaired students' needs and pass the responsibility of teaching the students to the interpreter. This does not necessarily mean that these professors have no affection for the deaf individuals. However, it must be considered that love and affection do not guarantee a high-quality education for deaf individuals.

Aside from the perceptions of hearing-impaired secondary students on the efficacy of online learning, there are several paradigms that are not sufficiently explored in the study of deaf education. One of the constructs that was never explored is the belief or sense of efficacy of the teachers regarding their ability to influence the performance of their hearing-impaired students. It was not until 2012 that Garberoglio, Gobble, and Cawthon investigated and discovered the significant correlation between the efficacy beliefs among teachers and the characteristics of the school.

Thus, it is important to examine further school processes that affect the attitudes and beliefs of teachers toward deaf education. Other issues that teachers of hearing-impaired students need to be familiar with are the historical background of deaf education, ethnicity among the deaf population, academic success of hearing-impaired students in schools, the demographics of hearing-impaired secondary school students in the country, the universities and career opportunities available for them, and current laws for deaf education (Marschark et al., 2001).

1.3.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The right to education requires that all children are guaranteed access to education with equality in opportunities and quality, which are the very elements that define educational inclusion or inclusive education (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). The progress towards inclusion can reduce the different barriers that impede or complicate the access, the participation, and the learning quality. Special attention is given to the most vulnerable or disadvantaged students, who require more exposure to situations of exclusion and a good education (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). Many assume that online learning opens doors to education for anyone, anywhere, and at any

time, although this assumption cannot be made until online learning classes offer accommodations that suit all potential students. As such, it has become imperative to assess the live experiences of hearing-impaired school students taking part in online classes.

1.4.0 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

Special Education: These are direct instructional activities designed to support some of the following student exceptionalities: learning disabled, physically/medically challenged hearing impaired, and gifted and talented.

Inclusion: This is a commitment to educate each child in the least restrictive environment in the school and classroom that the child would otherwise attend. This involves bringing the support services to the child rather than moving the child to the services. This also requires that the child will benefit from being in the class without having to compete with the other students.

Inclusive School Practices: This is an initiative that was designed to support and provide schools with the resources to grant access for all students. This is so all students can achieve and progress through the general education curriculum and feel accepted into the academic and social culture of the school community.

1.5.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the perceptions of hearing-impaired school students on online learning.
- To study the perceptions of hearing-impaired school students on online learning based on gender.
- To study the achievement level of hearing-impaired school students through online learning.

1.6.0 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

1. There is no significant difference on the perception of hearing-impaired students
2. Hearing-impaired students have no average level of perceptions on online learning based on gender.

3. There is no significant difference in the achievement in hearing-impaired students with reference to gender.

1.7.0 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has following delimitations.

1. Only higher secondary school of Kerala State, particularly Thrissur district has been included.
2. Only two batches of students belonging to classes Commerce and Humanities of twelfth class are taken into consideration.
3. Students participating in the study must be deaf from birth and are required to use Sign Language as their primary communication method in everyday interaction.