Are deaf children, not children also?

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Can you tell if this new born is deaf or hearing?
Introduction

- Deaf children are born like everyone else.
- Can’t tell the difference until detection.
- From there deaf children are often treated differently.
- **Purpose of presentation** – though deaf, they are also children; must enjoy children’s rights.
General types of deaf children

- **Pre-lingual** deaf child from Deaf families.
- **Pre-lingual** deaf child from other families.
- **Deafened** children.
- **Hard of hearing** children.
- Deaf children of **refugees**.
- Deaf children who are **orphans**.
- Deaf children with multiple **disabilities**.
95% born from hearing families

• Discouraged from learning SASL.
• Research – avoidance of SASL does not improve speech abilities.
• Exposure to SASL early in life important.
Parents

Many unfamiliar with deafness:

- Overwhelming task of learning.
- Interpersonal relationship
- Possible disappointment
- Decision making

ALL THESE TAKE TOLL ON PARENTS
**Misconceptions: Society**

- Deaf children should fit into the hearing world and learn to speak.
- Deaf children are inherently underachievers.
- Deaf and ‘dumb’ are linked.
- SA Sign Language is not a language.
- It is impossible to learn SA Sign Language.
- Deafness is a mental disability.
Misconceptions: Parents

- If a deaf child starts to talk late, he/she will be a great thinker.
- A few words in speech are more beneficial than a fluency in SASL.
- More oral teaching will result in fluent speech.
- SASL hinders a deaf child’s ability to speak and write.
- Hearing aids will make a deaf child hear.
- SASL is not recognized in South Africa.
- Deafness is a passport to illiteracy.
Family Rejection vs Acceptance

REJECTION
- deafness viewed as an obstacle
- barrier to socialisation
- low expectation
- denies access to daily conversations.
- no access to critical social information.
- Self-pity

DEVELOPMENT HAMPERED
Family Acceptance

✓ Their children
✓ Preferred communication mode
✓ Reflect behaviour expected by society
✓ Self-confident
✓ Life – positive experience
✓ Become self-assured young adults
Raising a deaf child

Many issues involved:

- Emotional
- Communication
- Enculturation
- Education
- Employment
- Marriage
Growing up deaf

- Perception of the world different
- No access to auditory information
- No access to spoken communication
- Deaf child obtains info through vision
Two main Perceptions of deafness

Human Rights View

Pathological View
Pathological View

• Disease
• Deficit
• Speech/hearing

COMMON RESULTS:

- Devaluation
- Dehumanisation
- Inhibited development
On entering school...

Many implications:

- primarily linguistic
- primarily cognitive
Further implications

• Deaf children like other minority children, taught through the medium of a dominant language.

• It hinders profound literacy, gaining of knowledge and skills.

• Over 98% of deaf learners don’t receive education in their most fluent language, SASL.

• Deaf children depends on formal education to develop to the highest possible level.
**Human Rights view**

✓ Deafness ok
✓ Communication
✓ Love
✓ Attention
✓ Sense of belonging
✓ Encouragement
✓ Friendship
✓ Freedom
✓ Culture
✓ Choices
✓ High expectations

**RESULTS: COMPLETE CHILD – GOOD SELF-IMAGE**
If above not met...

- Devastating effect on mental health.
- Social behaviour typical of small children.
- Caught in web of misunderstandings.
- No sense of belonging in adulthood.
ONE NB thing to remember about deaf children...

• They are children
• They need love
• They need everything a child needs.
Conclusion

No matter what decision we make...

• on how to RAISE
• on how to EDUCATE

“Deaf children are HUMAN BEINGS, our CHILDREN and our FUTURE”
I thank you