

Multilingualism: innovations in development work in deafness – a case study

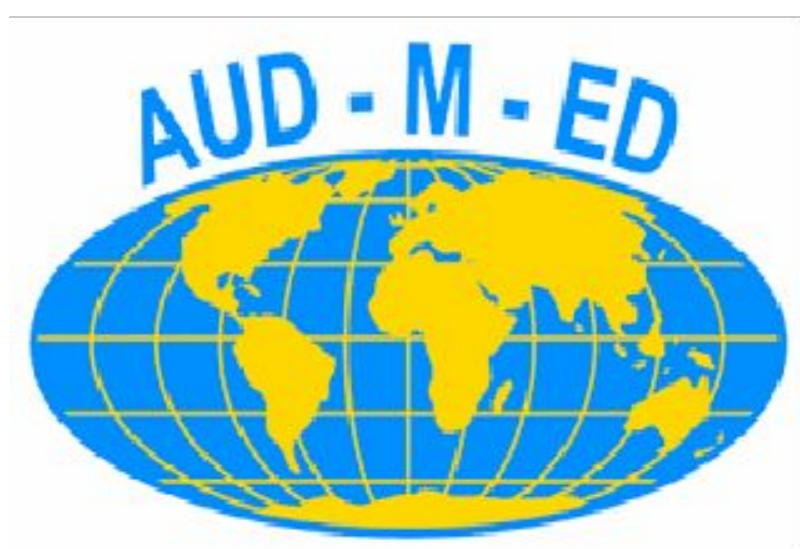
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Introduction

Interventions in the field of deafness in multilingual low-resource environments, often focus on direct input, but also on training in-country workers. McPherson and Brouillette (2008) reported a decade ago on the imbalance for low resource environments: 66% of the world's approximately 300 million hearing-impaired live in less developed countries where one million of the needed 30 million hearing aids are fitted each year by one audiologist per half million people. More recently, Knoors, Brons and Marschark (2019) collected academically informed knowledge about the state and aims of deaf education and related audiology in low-resource environments with chapters authored by the practitioners and academics in the countries themselves.

This case study presents an ongoing project training in-country workers and bridging multilingual communities between the University of Ghana and UK audiology lecturers (with connections to the British Society of Audiology and the Aud M-Ed Trust) with the aim of sustainability by building links in assessment and development. The project has just completed the second year of volunteer university guest lecturers.



Reflections

Both students and professionals were eager and keen to learn and to contribute. They engaged in planned interactive sessions and made community learning and teaching a pleasure for the guest lecturers. With freedom from exam bases, material was flexibly delivered and adapted to fit students' interests and local need. Learners and lecturers alike helped bridge our cultural gaps, such as views on shared-decision making or historical/spiritual views about causes of deafness. This helped to make the sessions relevant to how audiology works in Ghana, aiding focus on what seemed most achievable. For example, setting up a worthwhile tinnitus information session for patients was deemed more imminently do-able whilst other goals, such as earlier identification will take longer to achieve.



Similarities between humans are always greater than differences. Across both cultures, adults want a cure for tinnitus and feel reluctant to disclose hearing loss and parents are just desperate for their deaf babies to communicate and be happy.

Background

With a population close to 30 million in ten administrative regions, in the mid-2000s Ghana had only seven Audiologists and two Speech and Language Therapists, who were concentrated in only three of the regions. A team of Audiologists from Utah, USA, donated diagnostic audiology equipment, trained audiometric technicians and in 2005/2006 Korle Bu, Ghana's largest teaching hospital, had a well-equipped and functional Hearing Assessment Centre.



To address the huge deficit of professionals in the country Audiology and Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) programme was developed at the University of Ghana in the School of Biomedical and Allied Health sciences in 2011. The Department started with just one programme - MSc in Audiology with six students. By the end of 2020, there should be about 30 Audiologists and 24 SLTs in place, all trained in-country. This feat has been generously supported by groups like Aud Med Trust and the Direct Aid Programme of the Australian Government who either send international faculty or provide funds to source them. The aims of deaf education professionals in Ghana are to establish audiology assessment centres in each of the ten regions of the country (Oppong A, Fobi D; 2019)

Future Projects

The experience was personally enriching to both guest lecturers who highly recommend the project, and the wonderful Ghanaian hospitality! The team at Korle Bu hospital are collaborative about topic offers from different specialities; and dedicated students, teachers and clinicians are clearly working very hard to enable audiology to move forward in Ghana. The project benefits the graduate students visited, but also the guest lecturers who come away with intrinsic reward positively impacting their own professional and personal development and subsequently those of their students and colleagues in their home university. Readers are encouraged to investigate issues such as training models, technologies and services best appropriate in particular lower-resource environments and to consider impact and sustainability.



Preparation and Delivery

The ongoing project in Accra sponsored by Aud Med Trust recruit pairs of volunteer lecturers via British Society of Audiology avenues. It contributes to the postgraduate training and CPD of Ghanaian audiologists, bridges communities between the University of Ghana and UK audiology university lecturers, and has just completed its second season. Topics this year, developed collaboratively between the Head of Department and guest lecturers, ranged from speech and language development to adult tinnitus diagnostics and rehabilitation; and were delivered over an intensive week to 40 delegates including students, interns and practicing professionals from Audiology and Speech Language Therapy.



Resources

- Knoors H, Brons M and Marschark M eds (2019) *Deaf Education Beyond the Western World*, Oxford University Press.
McPherson B, Brouillette R Eds, (2008) *Audiology in Developing Countries*. Nova Science Publishers.
Oppong A, Fobi D (2019) Deaf Education in Ghana, in Knoors H, Brons M and Marschark M eds *Deaf Education Beyond the Western World*, Oxford University Press.

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