

Institutional Support for Deaf Undergraduates in Mainstream Universities: A Case Study of a Ghanaian Tertiary Education Institution.

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education policies emphasise equitable access to higher education for deaf students, yet gaps in institutional support persist in mainstream universities. This qualitative phenomenological case study explored institutional support mechanisms for deaf students at a Ghanaian Tertiary Education Institution (GTEI), with a focus on social inclusion beyond the classroom. Using an interpretivist paradigm, data were collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) with 32 deaf students and video observations of academic and social interactions. One-on-one interviews were also conducted with three (3) Heads of Department and three (3) Resource Coordinators using a semi-structured interview guide. Thematic analysis revealed that deaf students received support from department heads, resource coordinators, peers, and interpreters. Key findings indicated that financial aid (e.g., scholarships) was limited by competition with hearing peers, whereas human resource support (e.g., peer interactions, tutoring) enhanced academic motivation. However, interpreter shortages limited access in extracurricular and administrative settings, leading to reliance on informal peer assistance. The study advances knowledge by demonstrating that institutional support for deaf students in Ghanaian higher education operates as a fragmented, ad hoc system rather than a coherent policy framework, a finding that complicates universalist models of inclusive education developed in Western contexts.

The Ghanaian context, characterised by decentralised funding mechanisms, an ambiguous sign language policy, and the concentration of deaf students in disability-focused programmes, extends international research by showing how resource constraints and postcolonial educational histories shape the availability of support in ways that differ from those in high-resource settings. Recommendations include institutional policy reforms for support services, the implementation of universal design, and enhanced disability resource services.

Keywords: deaf students, institutional support, mainstream universities, social inclusion, accessibility

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, inclusive education policies have emphasised equitable access to higher education for students with disabilities, including deaf learners (United Nations, 2007; World Bank, 2020). Despite global commitments to inclusion, deaf students in mainstream universities continue to face significant barriers to academic and social participation due to inadequate institutional support (Marschark et al., 2011; Schwab et al., 2019). Research indicates that successful inclusion hinges on key factors, including institutional support, peer interactions, accessibility, and accommodations (French & Oakes, 2004).

Deaf students often encounter communication challenges that hinder their engagement in classroom discussions, social activities, and campus life (Hauser & Marschark, 2008; Luckner et al., 2012). Studies have shown that without appropriate support - sign language interpreters, captioning services, and peer mentorship, deaf students experience social isolation and academic marginalisation (Leeson, 2012; Maroney et al., 2020). Institutional

support structures, including disability resource centres and faculty training, play a crucial role in mitigating these challenges (Oppong et al., 2018; Schwab et al., 2019).

In Ghana, policies such as the Disability Act (Act 715) of 2006 and the Inclusive Education Policy of 2015 mandate equal access to education for students with disabilities. However, empirical research on the effectiveness of institutional support for deaf students in Ghanaian universities remains limited (Fobi & Oppong, 2019; Oppong et al., 2018). What remains unknown is how institutional support actually functions in a resource-constrained, linguistically diverse Sub-Saharan African university where sign language recognition is ambiguous, and interpreter ratios are unregulated. This study, therefore, asked: What institutional support mechanisms are available to deaf students at the GTEI, and how do these mechanisms shape their academic and social inclusion?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has examined the various forms of support and accommodation provided by university communities to ensure that deaf students can fully participate in their educational experiences. However, existing studies have been conducted predominantly in Western, high-resource educational systems with established legal frameworks for sign language recognition and mandated interpreter ratios.

Studies have identified a range of accommodations offered at mainstream universities, including sign language interpreting services, note-taking assistance, captioning services, and assistive technologies (Powell et al., 2021; Smith & Andrews, 2019). These accommodations aim to facilitate effective communication and equal access to educational materials. Universities often maintain disability support services offices that provide specialised assistance, accessibility resources, advocacy for accommodations, and support in navigating university systems (Lang et al., 2018; National Deaf Centre, 2020). However, existing evidence has focused almost exclusively on classroom-based accommodation, paying limited attention to whether and how support extends to extracurricular activities, residential life, administrative interactions, and informal social spaces. This gap is particularly significant in contexts such as Ghana, where academic and social spaces interpenetrate, and deaf students cannot neatly categorise their support needs.

Faculty members also play a crucial role in supporting deaf students, particularly when they receive training on inclusive teaching practices and effective communication strategies (Punch & Duncan, 2020; Scheetz & Martin, 2016). Trained faculty adapt instructional methods, provide visual aids, and allow alternative forms of assessment to create inclusive learning environments. Collaboration between faculty and support professionals, such as interpreters and educational assistants, facilitates communication and social interactions (Cannon et al., 2020; McKee et al., 2021).

However, literature has largely assumed that faculty training, when provided, is sufficient and culturally neutral. What remains undertheorized is how faculty attitudes toward deafness in postcolonial contexts, where deaf education has historically been framed as charity rather than as a matter of rights, shape the uptake and effectiveness of training.

Positive attitudes and inclusive behaviours from classmates are key factors in promoting social integration (Cawthon & Garberoglio, 2017; Hintermair, 2018). When classmates demonstrate acceptance, support, and inclusive behaviours (e.g., effective communication strategies and social interaction), deaf students feel more included and achieve better social outcomes. Structured peer mentorship programs and co-enrollment models enhance academic engagement and extracurricular participation (Guardino et al., 2021; Listman et al., 2021).

However, the literature portrays peer support as a supplement to formal institutional support rather than as a substitute necessitated by institutional failure. In resource-constrained settings, this distinction collapses: informal peer support is not an enhancement but often the only available option.

Research has documented that deaf students receive significantly less financial aid than hearing peers and are more likely to enrol in lower-cost certificate programs due to financial constraints (National Deaf Centre, 2025).

Decentralised funding systems create barriers for deaf students seeking accommodation (National Deaf Centre, 2023). Inadequate financial support negatively impacts academic progress and wellness (Mantey et al., 2017).

Also, research has not adequately theorised how financial barriers intersect with communication barriers, for example, how competition with hearing peers for merit-based scholarships disadvantages deaf students whose academic records may reflect past lack of accommodation rather than lack of ability.

As established in existing literature, deaf students need accommodations, faculty training, peer support, and financial aid. However, three critical gaps remain. First, most studies have been conducted in Western, high-resource systems with established legal protection. Second, research has focused on classroom accommodation rather than holistic support across all university activities. Third, literature has treated institutional support as a policy output rather than a fragmented, negotiated process shaped by local conditions. This study addresses these gaps by examining how institutional support operates at a Ghanaian university, a context characterised by a postcolonial educational history, an ambiguous sign language policy, concentrated enrollment of deaf students in disability-focused programs, and severe resource constraints.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a phenomenological case study design (Creswell & Poth, 2018) grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, which emphasises understanding participants' subjective experiences (Patton, 2002). The research question's dual demands drove the integration of phenomenology and case study: understanding the essence of the lived experience of receiving (or being denied) institutional support (phenomenology) and attending to the contextual particularity that shapes the availability of support (case study).

Phenomenology was selected because the study sought to capture how deaf students consciously experience and make meaning of institutional support, i.e., what it feels like to receive a bursary, to request an interpreter, to be told no. Phenomenology's focus on lived experience (Lebenswelt) and intentionality enabled access to participants' subjective, embodied experiences of navigating support systems (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This was essential because institutional support is not merely a set of services but involves perception, judgment, frustration, and hope.

A case study was concurrently employed because the specific context of a Ghanaian public university inextricably shapes institutional support at the GTEI. The case study approach enabled systematic attention to boundaries (this particular university, these 32 students and 3 Heads of Departments (HoDs) and 3 Resource Coordinators (RCs), this policy environment) and contextual conditions (Ghana's Disability Act, the Resource Centre for Students with Special Needs, interpreter deployment models, the concentration of deaf students in SPED and REHAB programs). Rather than seeking context-free generalisations, the case study framed the GTEI as a bounded system, with its unique features treated as analytically central (Acheampong, 2024).

The integration occurred through two analytical moves. First, phenomenological epoché (bracketing of researcher assumptions) guided initial engagement with FGD and semi-structured interview transcripts, focusing on how support appeared to participants rather than fitting their experiences into preset categories (e.g., "financial aid" as a theme emerged from participants' accounts, not from a pre-existing checklist). Second, case study logic guided sampling, contextual description, and boundary-setting, ensuring that findings were always anchored to the GTEI's specific institutional landscape, including its physical layout, interpreter staffing levels, and the historical trajectory of its disability support office (Acheampong, 2024).

Participants

The study involved 32 deaf students (20 male, 12 female), purposively selected to ensure representation across academic departments (Cohen et al., 2018). Selection criteria included: (a) diagnosed as deaf, (b) enrolled at the GTEI, and (c) registered with the university's Resource Centre for Students with Special Needs (RCSSN). Participants were enrolled in five academic departments, with concentrations in Special Education (SPED) and Community-Based Rehabilitation (REHAB) programs. Also, three HoDs and three Resource Coordinators were involved in the study. The criteria for selecting the HoDs were that they had headed departments that had received deaf undergraduate students for more than a decade and had an appreciable level of understanding of support

strategies. Resource coordinators should have worked in that capacity for over 5years to meet the inclusion criteria for the study.

Table 1 presents participant distribution.

Table 1: Distribution of Participants by Gender and Programme of Study

Programme of Study	Male	Female	Total
Special Education (SPED)	12	7	19
Community-Based Rehabilitation (REHAB)	4	0	4
Graphic Design	2	1	3
Basic Education	1	1	2
Early Childhood Education	0	2	2
Art	1	1	2
HoDs	2	1	3
Resource Coordinators	1	2	3
Total	23	15	38

Source: Adopted from Acheampong 2024(Field data, 2022)

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) and video observations. FGDs were conducted in Ghanaian Sign Language (GhSL) with professional interpreters, following Creswell's (2007) guidelines for FGD procedures. Discussion topics included: accessibility of physical and information environments, availability and quality of accommodations, experiences with disability support services, access to financial aid, and challenges encountered in academic and social settings.

Video observations captured naturalistic interactions in academic settings (classrooms, lecture halls) and social settings (cafeterias, halls of residence, extracurricular events). Recordings were used to assess institutional accessibility—not only whether interpreters were present, but whether deaf students could participate equally in all activities.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) reflexive approach and was conducted within the interpretivist paradigm.

- ❖ **Phase 1 – Familiarisation:** The research team (lead researcher, two GhSL interpreters, and a certified interpreter from the Ghana National Association for the Deaf) independently read all FGD transcripts and reviewed observation notes. Each team member produced initial observational memos noting recurring references to support sources, barriers, and gaps.
- ❖ **Phase 2 – Initial Code Generation:** Using semantic coding (staying close to participants' stated descriptions), the team generated 72 initial codes. Examples included "received bursary once," "applied but never heard back," "interpreter absent for sports event," "hearing friend interprets at clinic," "department head provided materials," and "RCSSN staff helpful but understaffed." No frequency counts were recorded at this stage.
- ❖ **Phase 3 – Code Refinement:** The team convened three code review sessions to collapse redundant codes, resolve disagreements through consensus discussion, and identify code clusters sharing conceptual family resemblance. For example, "interpreter not available for SRC meeting," "no interpreter at hostel orientation," and "interpreter absent for campus event" were consolidated under "interpreter shortage across non-academic settings" because each addressed the same structural gap.
- ❖ **Phase 4 – Theme Development:** Through abductive reasoning (moving iteratively between data and existing theory on institutional support), the team grouped code clusters into candidate themes organised around types of support: material resources (physical accommodations, assistive technology), human resources (interpreters, peer support, tutoring, faculty assistance), and financial support (bursaries, scholarships).

- ❖ **Phase 5** – Theme Review and Consolidation: The team examined whether themes were internally coherent and externally distinct. Two sub-themes ("peer tutoring" and "informal academic help from friends") were merged into a single "peer academic support" theme. The final thematic structure comprised three main themes (material resources, human resources, and financial support) with associated sub-themes.
- ❖ **Phase 6** – Writing and Integration: Themes were organised not as a frequency-based hierarchy but as an analytical typology of support types, with analysis focused on gaps between policy rhetoric and lived experience.

A Canon EOS 60D video recorder was used; Wondershare Filmora 11 enabled frame-by-frame viewing and snapshot extraction of communicative episodes. The researcher engaged a video editing professional to help capture scenes from the videos. Wondershare Filmora 11 was used to view videos and pictures of scenes showing the communication strategies used by the deaf students. Once all the pictures were taken as screenshots from the videos, they were sorted and categorised by theme, then saved in folders on the computer. The researcher performed the sorting, and an expert sign language interpreter was used to ensure that no important scenes were missing from the videos and to identify Institutional Support for Deaf students for analysis.

Reflexivity practices were embedded throughout. The lead researcher maintained a reflexive journal documenting his status as a hearing researcher with sign language competency, shaped interactions, particularly how participants may have hesitated to criticise the university to an outsider. Two peer debriefing sessions were conducted with faculty members in deaf education who were not involved in data collection; these sessions challenged the team to support interpretations with direct evidence from the data. Member checking occurred through an open forum where preliminary findings were presented to participants, who confirmed, challenged, or refined the identified themes. Interpretive disagreements between the lead researcher and the GNAD-certified interpreter (e.g., whether a participant's comment indicated "satisfaction" or "resigned acceptance") were resolved by collaboratively returning to the raw transcripts until consensus emerged.

Also, triangulation of methods (FGDs, interviews and observations) enhanced credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking ensured accuracy in the interpretation of transcripts. A key limitation was the single-institution design, which limits generalizability; however, thick descriptions of the GTEI's context improve transferability to similar Ghanaian and Sub-Saharan African universities (Yin, 2018).

FINDINGS

The study revealed that deaf students at the GTEI received support from five sources: (a) Heads of Department, (b) Resource Coordinators (RCSSN staff), (c) hearing peers, (d) sign language interpreters, and (e) informal individual arrangements (in hostels, market, clinic, eatery, transportation). However, support was fragmented, inconsistent, and often required significant self-advocacy. Table 2 presents the thematic structure.

Table 2: Themes and Sub-Themes in Institutional Support for Deaf Students

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description
Material resources	Academic settings	Physical accommodations, assistive technology, accessible materials
	Social settings	Accessibility of halls, events, and transportation
Human resources	Peer support	Friends providing interpretation, academic help, and social inclusion
	Sign language interpreting	Formal interpreter services (classroom-focused, limited elsewhere)
	Tutoring	Academic support from peers or specialised tutors
	Faculty/staff support	Department heads, RCSSN coordinators, lecturers
Financial support	Bursaries/scholarships	Limited access due to competition with hearing peers

Source: Field data, 2022

Financial Support

Although most deaf students were aware of financial aid programs (bursaries, scholarships), only 4 of 32 participants had ever received any financial support. Participants attributed this scarcity to direct competition with hearing peers for merit-based awards, with no separate allocation for students with disabilities. DS11 stated:

"I have not enjoyed any bursary from the university." (DS11, FG2)

DS24 added:

"I have not received any support from a bursary or scholarship. I filled in a form once, but I have never received any bursary yet." (DS24, FG3)

"..... I must admit they always submit their bursary form late, that is why they do not get it, or even if it comes, it is delayed" (RC 2)

The finding reveals a systemic gap: deaf students are expected to compete on equal footing with hearing peers whose educational trajectories have not been disrupted by communication barriers and lack of prior accommodations.

Peer Support

Deaf participants reported receiving significant social and academic support from hearing peers, which served as a positive stimulant for inclusion in campus life. DS31 explained:

"I am motivated to study because of the support I get from my hearing friends." (DS31, FG4)

DS17 described the relational dimension:

"The discussions I have been having with friends in the evening also motivate me to learn. I sometimes watch Premier League games with my friends." (DS17, FG3)

"The support they get from their colleagues and friends helps to reduce the weight of shielding extracurricular responsibility on us" (RC 2)

This finding indicates that peer support operates not only instrumentally (e.g., academic help) but also effectively (e.g., motivation, a sense of belonging). However, this support was informal and uncoordinated by the university, raising questions about sustainability and equity.

Interpreter Services

The university provided sign language interpreting services, but these were overwhelmingly limited to classroom settings. For extracurricular activities, SRC general meetings, entertainment events, and administrative interactions, interpreters were rarely available. Participants reported having to arrange interpreters themselves or rely on hearing peers. A deaf participant noted:

"We often had to arrange for interpreters by ourselves, because the interpreters available in the university are few." (DS participant, FG3)

There were other comments like:

"We have few resource staff for many deaf students for lecture halls..... adding extracurricular activities to our schedule is going to be overwhelming" (RC 1)

"The student-interpreter ratio is always the problem.... I think as a university we can do better" (HoD 1)

At sports and games, SRC meetings, and social gatherings, deaf students depended on hearing colleagues for support, placing an informal burden on peers and excluding deaf students when no willing peer was present. This

finding reveals a critical gap between policy and practice: while interpreter services exist on paper, their limited hours, scope, and availability leave deaf students excluded from large swaths of university life.

Material Resources

Material resources such as accessible classroom materials, assistive technology, and physical accommodations were reported as available in some academic settings but absent in social spaces. For example, participants noted that hostels, the market, the clinic, and eateries lacked any systematic accessibility provisions. Deaf students navigated these spaces through individual arrangements rather than institutional design. The findings collectively reveal a fragmented support ecosystem: financial aid is scarce and competitive; interpreter services are classroom-bound; peer support is informal and uncoordinated; material resources are inconsistently distributed. No single source of support was reliably available across all contexts. Deaf students, therefore, engaged in constant self-advocacy and improvisation, a form of labour that hearing students are not required to perform. A deaf participant said:

“I am motivated to study because of the support I get from my hearing friends” (DS 31 -FG4)

Another participant also noted:

“The discussions I have been having with friends in the evening also motivate me to learn. I sometimes watch Premier League games with my friends” (DS 17 - FG 3).

The HoDs, Resource coordinators, and other Staff members affirmed that they have not come across any institutional policy on inclusion or disability. However, the university has various efforts in place to ensure inclusionary support. This is a comment made by a student:

“Before I came to L100, I read more about the inclusive education policy in Ghana, and till now, I have not seen anything happening here. I see the document as all lies because there are no provisions for it at the University. It makes me feel so sad because the document has elaborated a lot of good things, but the administration is very poor, and we, as disabled students, do not benefit from anything.” (R (IA) - FG 2)
(A verbatim expression by a deaf student)

Other comments by Resource coordinators and Heads of Administrative departments (HoDs) revealed that:

“There is no institutional policy on inclusion at UEW.” (RCC) (A verbatim expression by a Resource Centre Coordinator (RCC))

“I have not heard of any policy document on inclusion or support services for students with special needs.” (HoD 1 &2)

“I have seen some attempts by the University to put in place some measures to facilitate inclusion, apart from interpreting and note-taking services. I have not come across any policy on it.” (A verbatim expression **HoD 3**)

These comments suggest that UEW has no policy on inclusion or support services for students with special needs in general and therefore takes some ad hoc measures that, according to the participant, pose a greater challenge to their social inclusion in the University community. It was evident that the University was offering support services to deaf students, including sign language interpreting and tutoring. Most of these services were limited to the classroom and not to settings outside the classroom. In addition, the deaf participants stated that they often had to arrange interpreters themselves because the interpreters available at the university are few. This was evident in some social gatherings such as sports and games, SRC general meetings, and entertainment, where they (deaf participants) had to rely on their hearing colleague students for support. The findings reveal the importance of support provided by resource staff and the university to deaf students and suggest ways to improve support services to facilitate their social inclusion at the university. To fully understand the participants' experiences and perceptions, it is necessary to adopt a more holistic view of the findings by conducting an in-depth reading of educators' responses.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Existing research has often framed institutional support as a technical matter of resource provision - more interpreters, more captioning, more training (Marschark et al., 2020; Smith & Andrews, 2019). The present findings challenge this universalist framing by demonstrating that the availability of support is not simply a function of funding levels but also of how resources are organised, prioritised, and distributed across contexts.

At the GTEI, interpreter services existed but were concentrated in classrooms to the exclusion of social spaces. This is not merely a resource shortage but a policy choice about where deaf students' participation matters. By framing "inclusion" as classroom access, the institution implicitly deems extracurricular, residential, and social participation as optional rather than essential. This finding refines theoretical accounts of inclusion by introducing the systematic allocation of support to academically visible settings while neglecting the relational spaces where belonging is forged.

Literature has also treated peer support as a supplement to formal institutional support -a nice addition to interpreter services and accommodations (Guardino et al., 2021; Listman et al., 2021). This study reveals that at the GTEI, peer support serves as a substitute for the absence of institutional provisions. Deaf students rely on hearing friends not because peer support is pedagogically valuable (though it may be), but because no other support is available for SRC meetings, sports events, or clinic visits.

This finding deepens theoretical understanding of institutional responsibility. When informal peer support becomes the primary mode of access, the institution externalises its legal and ethical obligations onto students, disproportionately onto deaf students who must recruit and train their own interpreters, and onto hearing students who perform uncompensated linguistic labour. This constitutes a form of institutional abandonment that existing inclusion frameworks have not adequately theorised.

The Ghanaian higher education context exhibits three distinctive features that extend or complicate international research on institutional support.

First, the decentralisation of disability funding in Ghana means that individual students often must apply for bursaries in direct competition with hearing peers, rather than receiving dedicated allocations. This competitive funding model assumes a level playing field that does not exist. Deaf students' academic records may reflect past lack of accommodation, not lack of ability. International research that assumes dedicated disability funding streams (National Deaf Centre, 2023, 2025) does not travel cleanly to the Ghanaian context.

Second, the ambiguous legal status of Ghanaian Sign Language (GhSL), unlike countries where sign language is constitutionally recognised, means that interpreter provision is discretionary rather than mandatory. Universities face no legal mandate to achieve specific interpreter-to-student ratios or to extend interpreting to non-academic settings. This legal precarity shapes deaf students' experiences of support in ways that research from legally protected contexts cannot capture.

Third, the concentration of deaf students in SPED and REHAB programs reflects Ghana's postcolonial educational history, where deaf students have been channelled into "appropriate" careers rather than pursuing diverse fields. This institutional concentration creates a self-reinforcing cycle: because deaf students are few in other departments, those departments see no need to develop interpreter capacity; because interpreter capacity is lacking elsewhere, deaf students concentrate further in SPED/REHAB. International research that samples deaf students across diverse majors may miss this disciplinary stratification.

The findings further suggest that current support frameworks, focused on providing designated accommodations (e.g., interpreters for classes, captioning for videos), are insufficient in the Ghanaian context. What participants needed was not merely access to specific resources but reliable, predictable support across all university activities, that is, what can be termed relational infrastructure: the systematic embedding of accessibility into the everyday fabric of institutional life, not as an add-on but as a design principle. By this, relational infrastructure would

include interpreter availability for SRC meetings, not just lectures; accessible information distribution in hostels, not just classrooms; financial aid mechanisms that account for deaf students' distinct barriers; and training for all staff (not just faculty) in deaf-aware interaction. This reframing shifts the locus of intervention from individual accommodations to systemic redesign.

Implications for Policy and Practice in Ghanaian Higher Education

For institutional policy, universities should move from fragmented, ad hoc support to comprehensive, systemic access planning. Specific actionable recommendations include: (a) establishing dedicated financial aid streams for deaf students that do not require competition with hearing peers, with simplified application processes and proactive outreach; (b) mandating interpreter availability for all major university activities (academic, extracurricular, residential, administrative), not just classroom instruction; (c) adopting centralized accommodation funding models (as implemented at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which increased event participation by 40% among deaf students) rather than leaving individual students to negotiate support; and (d) requiring universal design principles in all new construction and technology procurement, so that accessibility is proactive rather than reactive.

For the Resource Centre for Students with Special Needs (RCSSN), the Centre should shift from a reactive, case-management model to a proactive, system-change model. This includes conducting regular accessibility audits of all campus spaces and events; maintaining a registered, trained pool of interpreters available for both academic and non-academic bookings; and developing peer education programs that train hearing students in basic GhSL and deaf awareness, reducing the burden on deaf students to perform that teaching labour themselves.

For faculty and staff, professional development should move beyond one-time workshops to ongoing, embedded training that includes: effective communication strategies with deaf students (not reliant on interpreters alone); accessible course design (visual aids, captioned videos, clear turn-taking protocols); and referral pathways to RCSSN for accommodation requests, so that deaf students are not required to educate each new instructor individually.

For government and regulatory bodies, the National Council for Tertiary Education and the Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training should: (a) develop binding accessibility standards for all public universities, including interpreter-to-deaf-student ratios and non-academic support requirements; (b) allocate dedicated funding streams for disability support that cannot be redirected to other priorities; and (c) mandate regular accessibility reporting as a condition for accreditation.

For future research, longitudinal studies should examine whether dedicated financial aid streams improve deaf students' academic completion rates; comparative studies should examine institutional support across Ghana's public universities (which vary widely in RCSSN capacity); and intervention studies should evaluate whether centralised interpreter booking systems increase deaf students' participation in extracurricular activities.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that institutional support for deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba, operates as a fragmented, ad hoc system rather than a coherent policy framework. While support is available from multiple sources, such as department heads, resource coordinators, peers, and interpreters, it is inconsistent across contexts, with financial aid scarce, interpreter services classroom-limited, and peer support functioning as a substitute rather than a supplement to formal provisions. The study advances knowledge by demonstrating that institutional support is not merely a matter of resource levels but of how resources are prioritised, distributed, and embedded across all university activities. The Ghanaian context, with its decentralised, competitive funding models, ambiguous legal status of sign language, and concentrated deaf student enrollment in disability-focused programmes, extends international research by showing how resource constraints and postcolonial educational histories shape the availability of support in ways that differ from those in Western, high-resource settings. Without systemic attention to relational infrastructure, reliable, predictable support for deaf students across academic and social domains will continue to bear the disproportionate labour of making inclusion happen, while institutions remain legally compliant yet practically exclusionary.

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