

Sign Language interpretation on TV learning program

Omar Kayigi, a BATOD Special online member, tells us about his opportunity to contribute his sign language interpreter expertise to the TV-based learning provision during the pandemic in Rwanda

I have worked in special education at Umutara Deaf School for eight years: this is a residential school for the Deaf. I started working in this special education program in 2013. This is my chosen career because I find it to be my calling and I do it willingly.

I have learnt sign language and now I am able to interpret for deaf people.

When the Covid epidemic erupted in March 2020, all students had to return home, but later the government of Rwanda came up with a plan that students could continue to study at home through radio and television.

I was asked to interpret on television so that Deaf students would also be able to follow the lessons as well as their peers. It made me happy when the leaders at REB (Rwanda Education Board) gave me the opportunity to make my contribution to interpret on TV courses in the TV learning program which aims to help students to learn at home.

I am one of three interpreters who cover the programs.

Initially, they started with a program for secondary education, but then the program expanded.

Among the challenges we faced were the fact that students were able to provide feedback via text on the internet, perhaps asking questions about what they did not understand or commenting on the lesson delivered. However, because the Deaf students were more fluent in sign language than texting, I suspect there were many who were not able to participate in this feedback system.

Another difficulty was that some students may not have access to TV in their family. However, some students have told us that they approached their neighbours, and the students were able to learn together as another way to use it to follow the lessons, like others, so that they would not be left behind.

One of the things that helped me improve my delivery on the TV interpretation program was that I could get some feedback from students or other Deaf people who used social media, because a large percentage of the country's Deaf students use social media a lot. There were some things that they wanted to improve, so they would send their suggestions to me and I would share them with my colleagues, when the comments related to the teachers of different courses or about improving the translation or technical issues. Also, my colleagues would bring some feedback from their audiences and share these with me.

It has been an amazing and unexpected experience. I have learnt a lot and am very proud that REB wanted to include deaf pupils in their TV education program and that I was able to be there to meet that need. ■



Omar Kayigi is a Headteacher of a school for the Deaf, Umutara, in Rwanda.

Are you out there?

Do you work with deaf learners in a sixth form, in an FE college, with apprentices or do you have several Post 16s on your case list?



How many ToDs are working with this age group? There is almost no data about ToDs working with this age group, such as employment status, types of learners, working patterns, etc.

So will you please respond so that we can start collecting information?

Please contact me, Jill Bussien (member of the BATOD National Executive Council), on JillBussien@gmail.com

Tablet ♦ smartphone ♦ PC ♦ laptop

No matter how you access it, the BATOD website provides members with a wealth of information, advice and materials to support professionals working in deaf education



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