

Quality Assurance Standards in the Management of School Curriculum: Case of Schools for the Deaf in Coast Counties, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

It has been the concern of the Ministry of Education, parents and other stakeholders over the poor academic performance in the schools for the deaf in the country in general and in the Coast counties in particular. Deaf learners have continued lagging behind their peers in academic achievement. The prudent management of the curriculum can enhance academic performance and this largely depends on the managers of the curriculum. Quality Assurance and Standards Officers as managers of the curriculum have a key stake in its implementation and the results thereby. The study sought to find out the role of Quality Assurance and Standards in the management of curriculum in schools for the deaf. The study was conducted in four counties of the Coast of Kenya which have schools for the deaf. The target population was the QASOs, Head teachers and teachers in the districts and counties which have schools for the deaf in the Coast. The sample size was forty-three teachers, seven head teachers and twelve QASOs. Simple random sampling was used to get the required number of teachers and purposive sampling for the head teachers and Quality Assurance and Standards Officers. Descriptive analysis design was used to establish the roles of quality assurance and standard management on performance. The data was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The study revealed that there are numerous challenges faced by quality assurance and standards officers in the management of curriculum in schools for the deaf. Respondents indicated that there is non-supervision of curriculum implementation by the QASOs. There is also lack of communication skills, lack of manpower, lack of funds and lack of knowledge in special needs education. These challenges impede the prudent management of the curriculum and external supervision by the QASOs in the schools for the deaf. This in turn leads to poor academic performance. Thus effective management of the curriculum by the Quality Assurance and Standards team may enhance performance if diligently carried out.

Key Words: Quality Assurance Standards, Management of school curriculum

1.0 Background Information

Quality Assurance Standards in schools is the process of bringing improvement in instruction and school management in general through visits by Quality Assurance and Standards Officers to the individual schools. According to Wango, (2009) Quality Assurance is aimed at promoting the highest possible standards through external evaluation of the school work. The Education Act (1968) Cap 211 of the Laws of Kenya section 18, has mandated Quality Assurance and Standards Officers to enter and inspect any school or place at which it is reasonably suspected that a school is being conducted at any time with or without notice, inspect and audit the accounts of the school or advise the manager of the school on the maintenance of accounting records for the purpose of inspection or audit. Quality Assurance and Standards is related to learner's welfare and participation. These entail to gender, guidance and counseling, clubs and games and special needs education. The purpose of Quality Assurance and Standards is to ascertain whether there is added value on education. (MOEST 2000). In this respect the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers seek to determine whether there is improvement in teaching and learning as well as other areas of school activities.

Quality Assurance and Standards is concerned with quality development. Quality development deals with development of teaching and learning materials, provision of advisory services and provision of opportunities for staff development. Advisory services are given on management of school curriculum, teaching and learning, examination and in-service training.

Wango (2009) asserts that Quality Assurance is supposed to be carried out by Quality Assurance Officers from the Ministry of Education and principals. Standards in the schools for the deaf in the coast region have been quite a challenge to Quality Assurance Officers, teachers and parents. This has been witnessed by the attainment of low grades in KCPE examination, poor reading skills and low literacy and numeracy skills among deaf learners. The Quality Assurance and Standards Officers are required to provide external scrutiny on how the curricula are being implemented at the school/institutional level, this means respective school/institutional management have the responsibility to ensure quality in a day to day basis. However, in the face of all this, academic performances in schools for the deaf still pose numerous challenges. For example in 2005, the Ministry of Education called the performance of schools for the deaf "dismal" (MoE 2005). Contrary to what is ideal, the report in the Ministry of Education Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards special education section sited inadequate internal and

external curriculum supervision and quality advice as one of the major constraints in academic achievement (MoE 2004).

According to the Ministry of Education, recent school visits have found out cases of laxity in curriculum delivery in the schools which has impacted negatively on learning outcomes in the institutions. The KCPE results analysis of 2013 indicated schools for the deaf in the counties of the Coast that do not perform well. Out of 500 marks the best school scored a mean grade of 134.8, (MoE 2013).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Quality Assurance Standards is critical in the management of Curriculum and its implementation. According to Wanjala (2005) Quality Assurance is a fundamental activity in the management of education and therefore part and parcel of the school improvement program. Despite all this, curriculum management in the schools for the deaf faces many challenges in Kenya. Coast counties schools for the deaf have continued lagging behind in performance of KCPE for many years, hence the need for this research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview of Special Needs Issues

In realization of the important role which education plays as an agent of National Development and Globalization, there has been agitation for a more functional and qualitative education all over the world. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 article 26 states, “every human being has a right to education which will be free and compulsory”. All are entitled to all rights without discrimination of any kind such as race, colour, sex, birth or any other status (Alaba, 2010).

Quality Assurance and Standards has been quite a challenge to Quality Assurance and Standards Officers and head teachers in schools for the deaf. This has been evident in the overall learning outcomes and the dismal performance in National Examinations. This is due to low reading skills and low acquisition of knowledge amongst deaf learners and poor curriculum delivery amongst teachers MoE (2003).

2.1 The Special Needs Curriculum.

Curriculum can be defined as all subjects taught and all activities provided by the school. A curriculum should be dynamic and reflect the philosophy and educational objectives of the nation. Indeed a curriculum is informed and legitimized by the nation’s aspirations and goals. Curriculum considerations include; allowing for special needs education, providing practical and learning experience for learners with special needs, taking into consideration the culture customs and traditions of the local people and the learning ability of learners with special needs. The main objective of educating children with special needs is to achieve the same national and individual goals of education as of non-handicapped children (MoE 2003). These goals include equipping them with the necessary knowledge skills for national and individual development (MoE 2003). The curriculum for learners with special needs in education can be adopted, adapted, specialized or specialist (MoE 2003).

2.2 Adopted Curriculum.

An adopted curriculum is a regular school curriculum that has been slightly modified and is mainly languages e.g. English, Kiswahili (MoE, 2003). This is modified curriculum that is done by determining its applicability to the learner with special needs.

Special curriculum is independent of the regular curriculum. However, when based on an existing regular curriculum it requires between 60% and 100% modification. Special curricula are intended to remedy fundamental problems in children. They include sign language, speech training, orientation and mobility, activities of daily living, occupational therapy and physiotherapy among others (MoE 2003). Head teachers and Quality Assurance Officers need to understand the difficulties in dealing with these types of curricula and help teachers overcome them. Smith et al (2001) posited that, part of the curriculum management in schools for the deaf include, in school support, consulting service, classroom service and school collaborative teams so as to maximize potential for learning.

2.3 Standards Assessment

Wango, (2009), asserts that standards assessment is central to education policy. This is principally because educational achievement must be accounted for. A lot of resources both financial and human are bestowed on the schools and there must be benchmarks to ensure such resources are put into good use. Probably it was with this in mind the Ministry of Education started a special education section in the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards. However, studies reveal that it is not clear whether the resources are put into good use as the learning outcomes are quite dismal.

2.4 Quality Assurance and Standards Officers.

The Education Act sect 18 (1) (1968) stipulates that the Minister for Education shall appoint officers with authority to enter and inspect any school or any place at which it is reasonably suspected that, a school is being conducted at any time with or without notice and report to him with respect to the school or any aspect thereof. Appointed officers may inspect or audit the school accounts or advise the head teacher on the maintenance of

accounting books or records for the purpose of inspection or audit. The essence of school inspection is to ensure Quality and Standards are maintained. Wango (2009) insists that the periodic external assessment should be complemented by continuous internal evaluation. Evidently external assessment can and ought to inform the government what goes on in the school setting. The information gives government officers a platform on which educational benchmarks can be placed, but according to Olembo et al (1992) a lot of suspicion is left concerning the intervention of supervision since the exercise is sometimes irregular and impromptu.

According to Wanjala (2005), Quality Assurance is a fundamental activity in the management of education. Since it is fundamental, it should be part and parcel of the school improvement program. It is therefore important to find out how QASOs undertake to perform their work in schools for the deaf.

2.5 School Management and Competence.

The responsibilities for the development of quality education in school are primarily vested on the Head teacher/Principal. The Head teacher should be the educational leader who tries to create a school climate and learning atmosphere that encourage professional development of the teachers and success for the learners (Pshara 2007). In view of this the head teacher needs to possess some competences such as human resource management, instructional leadership and financial resource management. The competences involved here are knowledge and skills so as to be able to execute these activities (Jacob 1989).

2.6 Professional Training and Curriculum Management.

A survey conducted by Jones (2001) noted that lack of training to a great deal have been responsible for the inefficiency and ineffectiveness so commonly observed in the performance of many educational systems. The management of an educational institution demands knowledge, skills and attitudes that would enable the educational manager to work effectively. There is need for a systematic and consistent preparation of educational administrators to enable them to discharge their duties effectively. Agaoglu (2005) investigated the exposure of head teacher to management training. The study examined the competence of primary school head teachers in management and whether the levels of the administrative experience, exposure to management training, support from professional support groups and administrative support from education officers' core related with the principal competence. It recommended that the state department and the graduate training institutions should work together to provide plans for training development activities. According to Randiki (2002), the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) was started to train teachers in curriculum delivery in Special Schools. Teachers for the deaf are equipped with information and techniques to handle deaf learners. However, there is little training on management of curriculum implementation.

2.7 Administrative Experience and Curriculum Management.

According to Earley (1991) primary school principals have a number of ways to acquire skills and knowledge for their management jobs. These ways include a mentor, reading books on management observing others as they act and react to school situations, self discovery, experiences on the job and finally course attendance in management. (Earley, 1993). Earley's observation has been the strongest points in school management in Kenyan schools. Many school administrators have gained knowledge and skills in their places of work. This however, has its weaknesses as Barnet observed

Bisschoff (2003) indicated that it is important to provide experience which can effectively assist the trained principals modify behavior and obtain knowledge for management with its new technology. In the National survey for people with disabilities, not much information is being emphasized on the current education status of people with disability case by case. It is likely that the deaf people are the less educated among all people with disabilities. Considering the fact that, the deaf graduates have continued to lag behind their peers in all academic achievement.

2.8 The Summary.

The purpose of QASOs is to ascertain whether there is added value on education (MoEST, 2000) in this respect Quality Assurance and Standards seek to determine whether there is improvement in teaching and learning as well as other areas of the school. Quality Assurance and Standards is concerned with quality development. Quality development deals with development technology and learning services and provision of opportunities for staff development. Advisory services are given for school management, curriculum implementation, teaching and learning and examinations. This supports the MoE vision which is quality education for development, (MoEST, handbook for inspection 2000).

Quality Assurance therefore is a mechanism used to evaluate the efficiency and appropriateness of teaching and learning in schools so as to ensure the delivery of high quality education. It is also a holistic method of identifying and resolving problem within the educational system in order to ensure continuous quality improvement. It can also be described as means of disseminating information regarding the quality of primary education.

The enrolment of children in school, the challenges of access/quality and quality of teaching and facilities must be resolved if schools are to offer quality education. According to Wango (2009), Quality Assurance includes defined

standards of achievement, documented procedures for all identified processes, established ways of responding to issues and clear accountability for outcomes. The maintenance of Quality Assurance and Standards substantially depends on the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, the quality and competence of the school principals, teachers and a large extent the parents of the school. The concern of the study is therefore to determine why there is the gap between Quality Assurance and Standards and the learning outcomes of learners in schools for the deaf.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction.

The study analyzed the Quality Assurance

Standards in the management of schools for the deaf adapted the descriptive analysis design. According to Chandran(2004), descriptive analysis involves a large group being questioned about a particular issue, but information is obtained from a sample rather than the entire population. The descriptive analysis helped provide the researcher with a deeper understanding of the role of Quality Assurance and Standards in the management of schools for the deaf. The design was suitable for this study since it allowed the researcher to gather information from samples representing a larger population. The target population was the head teachers and teachers teaching in the seven schools for the deaf in the Coast counties and Quality Assurance and Standard Officers in the areas where the schools were located. The researcher sampled all the counties where these schools were located. The researcher used simple random sampling to get the required number of teachers and purposive sampling for the head teachers and Quality Assurance and Standards Officers. The logic and power of purposive sampling is in selecting information rich enough for in-depth study. The use of purposive sampling techniques by the researcher is because of the relative advantage of time, money and manageability. The data obtained was edited coded and then classified into categories. Data analysis was done using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Data was presented in form of graphs, pie charts and percentages.

4. Research Findings and Discussion

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the data collected from the field where the researcher set out to investigate the role of Quality Assurance and Standards in the management of curriculum in the schools for the deaf in the counties of the Coast in Kenya. The results were also discussed in an attempt to answer the following research The study sought to establish answers to the research questions in relation to the objectives of the study. This section therefore, provides the findings which are outlined as follows:-

4.1 Visits by QASOs from the MoE

The QASOs from the MoE headquarters are usually officers from the Special Education Section of the Directorate of QAS. These officers are conversant with special needs education and their presence in schools usually boosts the morale of teachers. These officers are supposed to visit a school at least once in two years to advice on curriculum issues to compliment what the QASOs from the province and districts are doing. They also get an overview of how curriculum management takes place in the schools for the deaf in the entire country. The data by respondents on QASOs visits from MoE is presented on Figure 1

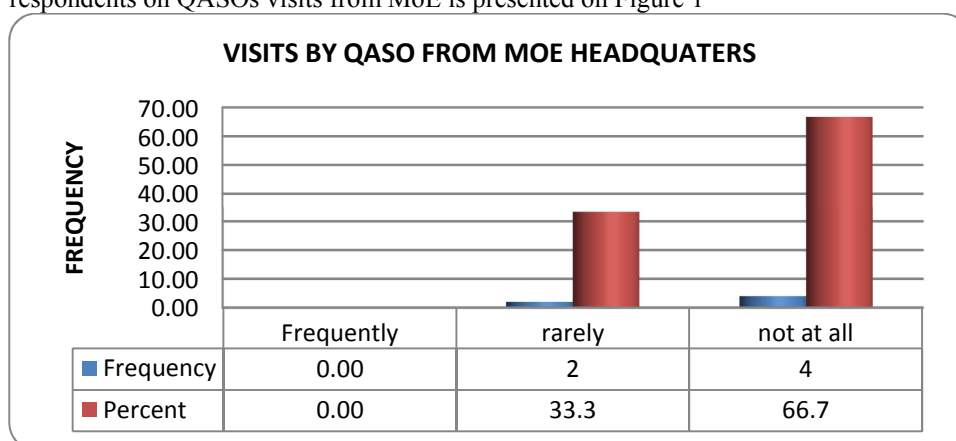


Figure1. Visits by QASOs from MoE Head Quarters

The findings in the figure above revealed that the majority of the schools have not been inspected by QASOs from the Ministry headquarters. This indicates that QASOs have not been able to offer external curriculum supervision and quality advice to the schools. Previous reports also indicate that there has been inadequate internal and external curriculum supervision and quality advice to these schools (MOE 2004). Therefore, the findings have

shown that schools for the deaf have not be able to benefit from the basic purpose of quality assurance that is the provision of an independent and external evaluation of the school work from the ministry headquarters.

4.2 QASOs Contribution to Quality Education.

Quality education is a long term objective which the government aims to achieve for all its citizens and assessment of standards is an unenviable process of quality education Wango (2009). Standards assessment is provided for by QASOs. The researcher sought to find out whether the QASOs contribute to this. The data is presented on figure 2.

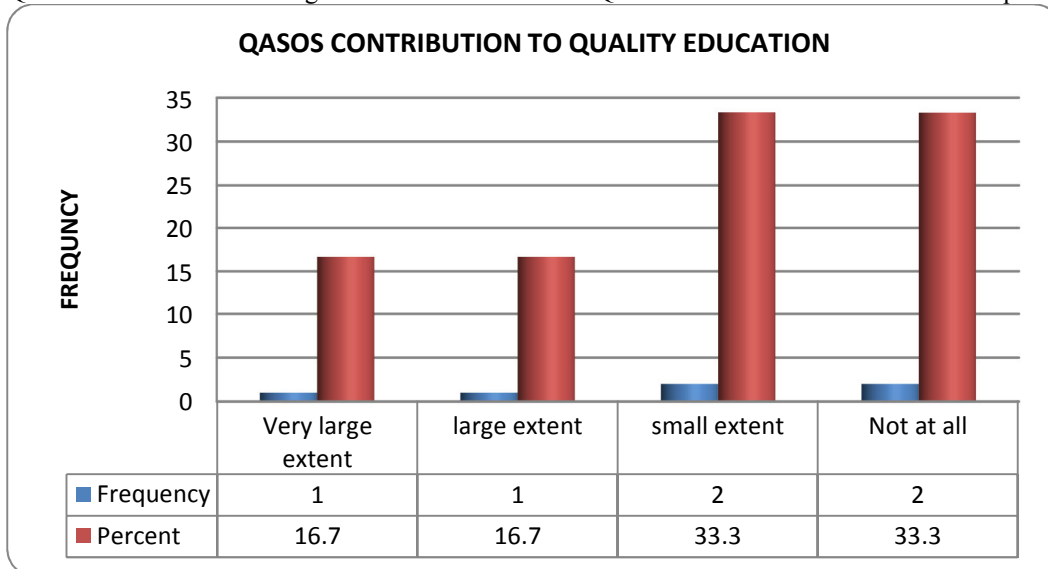


Figure2. QASOs contribution to Quality Education

The findings in the figure above demonstrated that QASOs have not contributed much towards enhancing quality education in these schools. The non contribution of quality education by these officers is demonstrated by the fact that the findings of the study revealed that majority of the schools have never been visited by these officers. The officers have not been able to offer adequate external supervision due to lack of visits. These results confirm some of the reports from the ministry of education (2005) that there is no external curriculum supervision and quality advice in the schools for the deaf.

The management of education demands knowledge, skills and attitudes that would enable educational managers to work effectively. There is need for a systematic and consistent preparation to enable them discharge their duties effectively. This can be done through effective training. The researcher sought to find out whether QASOs had any formal training as QASOs. The results were presented on figure 3.

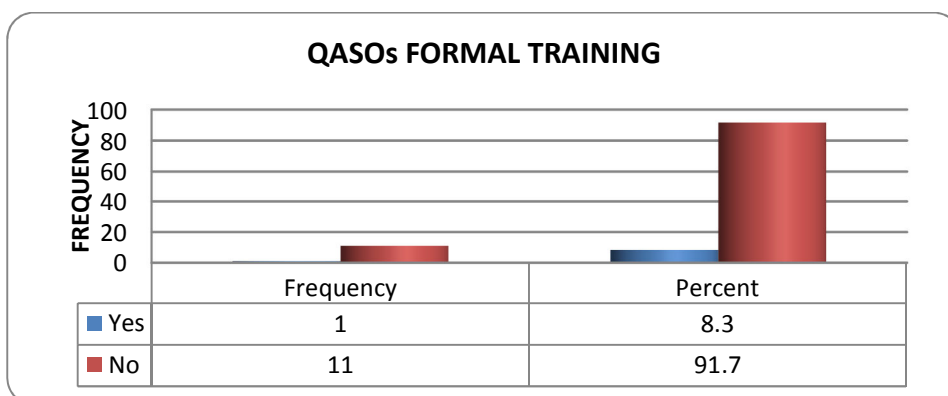


Figure3 QASOs Formal Training.

The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the QASOs in the field have had no formal training as QASOs. This attribute may impede the competencies of the QASOs as external managers of the curriculum implementation process since management demand knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable managers to work effectively. This supports the assertion by Jones (2001) that lack of training to a great extent has been

responsible for the inefficiency and ineffectiveness so commonly observed in the performance of many educational systems.

4.3 Training of Principals.

The management of an educational institution demands knowledge, skills and attitudes that would enable the manager to work effectively. Thus there is need for a systematic and consistent preparation of the educational administrators (Jones 2009). Therefore, the researcher sought to find out the training of Head teachers in schools for the deaf. The results were presented in figure 4.

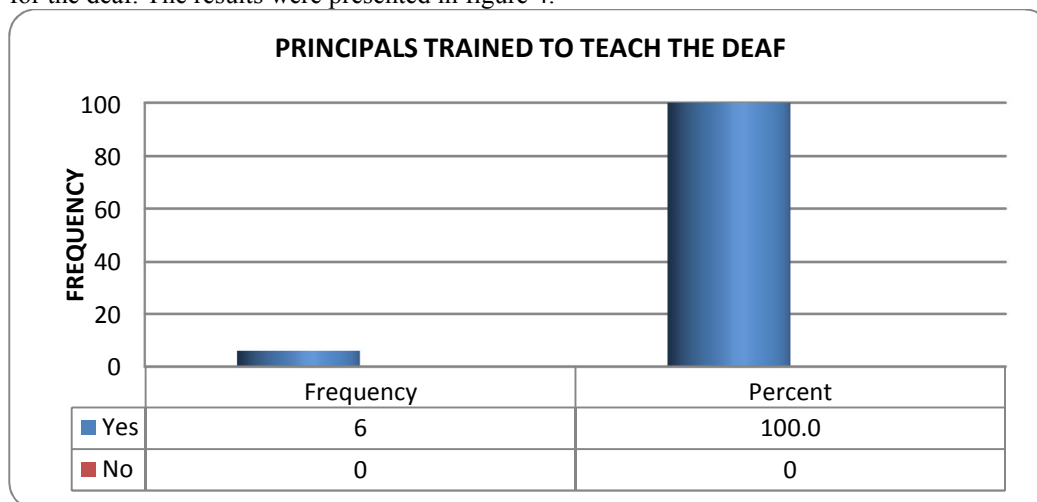


Figure4. Principals Trained to Teach the Deaf

The data presented shows that all the principals are trained teachers for the deaf. This indicates they have enough knowledge and skills in curriculum delivery in the schools. The findings revealed that the school administrators have the requisite knowledge and skills required in teaching and learning and in the management of curriculum in these schools. This confirms the contention by Koech (1999), that teachers must have appropriate academic and professional qualification and experience. However, this knowledge by the Head teachers have not been able to produce better results since the deaf still lag behind their peers in academic performance.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Conclusions

The main aim of the study was to analyze Quality Assurance Standards in the management curriculum in schools for the deaf. The literature review highlighted the importance of QAS and the management of curriculum implementation and enhancement of quality education, school management and competences. Based on the findings from the study, the following conclusions were made:-

- i. QASOs have little or no impact in the schools for the deaf because these officers hardly visit these institutions to offer support.
- ii. Although the QASOs in the counties have worked for a while, many of them have no formal training as QASOs. They also have little or no knowledge in special needs education. This coupled with lack of communication compromises their competence. However school administrators and teachers are trained teachers for the deaf.
- iii. Most head teachers and teachers in the schools for the deaf do not have a positive perception on the QASOs especially on the issue of curriculum management and implementation. This is because QASOs have not played an active role as external managers of the curriculum since the head teachers and the teachers have not seen the role played by the QASOs in their schools. However, the teachers believe that the QAS department is important and can play a crucial role in the management of curriculum in schools for the deaf. This can be achieved through external supervision of teaching and learning in the schools.
- iv. QASOs face challenges in the enhancement of quality education in schools for the deaf. These challenges include:-Lack of skills in communicating with deaf learners. They also lack basic knowledge in special needs education which includes the deaf. The QASOs lack facilitation in terms of resources. There is also lack of enough manpower in this department and therefore QASOs hardly visit schools for the deaf to discharge their duties, therefore, there is no effective external curriculum management.

5.4. Recommendations.

Considering the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher came up with the following recommendations:-

- i. The Ministry of Education should facilitate the QASOs with provision of resources and support to visit the schools more often so as to effectively monitor and assist teachers carry out their duties as required.
- ii. The Ministry of Education should increase the number of QASOs by recruiting more, so that they can effectively undertake their supervisory roles in the schools.
- iii. The Ministry of Education through KISE and KEMI should come up with programs to in-service QASOs in special needs education so as to upgrade their skills in supervising special institutions.
- iv. QASOs should take the initiative to visit the schools for the deaf so as to monitor and increase the scrutiny on teachers' activities to improve the quality of education.
- v. Efforts should be made by the Ministry of Education to expose QASOs to sign language skills in order to effectively supervise and monitor teaching and learning in the schools for the deaf.

5.5. Suggestions for further research.

Considering the limitations of the study, the researcher had the following suggestions for further research:-

An investigation into the challenges faced by principals on the management of curriculum in schools for the deaf and the replication of the study in other parts of the country so as to confirm the results of this study.

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