

## MAGAZINE REPORT

Inclusive Education is ideal only if there are support services in place. For Gospel High School, it has opened its doors to students who are deaf and has done so for many years now. The students are from the Hilton Special School and the Gospel School for the Deaf. Despite the challenges faced in attempting to provide education to Students who are deaf, the school has maintained its commitment to providing education to these students.

One of the important services required to make education accessible to Deaf students is the services of a Sign Language interpreter. Thankfully this is a service that is now available in Fiji although it is an emerging service. The School have four interpreters one for each of the form that has Deaf Students. The Deaf students are in form 3, 4 and 6.

The following table shows the number of Deaf students in each of these forms and their interpreter.

Interpreter	Form	No. of Deaf Students
Liviana Kulawea	3R	
Elenoa	4	
Makereta	6C	
Salote	6E	

The Role of interpreters is being the communication facilitator to and for the deaf students. The interpreters are present in all school programs to interpret for the Deaf students and this includes morning and afternoon devotions, school assemblies, sports and excursions.

Some of the challenges that are faced by the interpreters are:

- Wages: We are grateful to the Ministry Of Education for taking the responsibility of paying the interpreters however as this is a new profession that is still not recognized, the Ministry pays them very little. The Fiji Association for the Deaf and other Stakeholders are still advocating for the recognition of this profession.
- Qualification: This is a new profession so there is no training available locally for those wishing to take up a course that will train them to be

professional interpreters. The only training that was conducted to certify existing interpreters at that time was in 2006. The interpreters were trained by Australian trainers. The Fiji Association for the Deaf is currently liaising with local institutions to provide courses for this field.

- Misconception of Interpreters: (1) **Interpreters are responsible for the Deaf students they are interpreting for.** They are not. They are only here to facilitate communication. The students are the responsibility of the teacher. (2) **Students performance solely reflects on the skills of the interpreter.** Many other factors contribute to how a student performs. They are: The IQ level of the child, the effort put in by the child to study, family support, teaching methods, methods of assessment and many more. Deaf individuals have a language Disability. Reading and writing handicaps their ability to access or express information. Removing this barrier will help in identifying the child's true potential. (3) **Interpreters need to have a teacher's certificate to be competent in educational interpreting:** interpreters only facilitate communication not teach. Teachers teach so they require a teaching certificate. Interpreters require an interpreting certificate. One is certified based on the work or the role they will play. The interpreter only needs to familiarise him or herself with the information he or she will be interpreting. This is a requirement of any interpreter interpreting in any setting.

## APPRECIATION AND CONCLUSION

I want to thank the management of the Gospel High School, the Principal and the staff for the effort they have given to the welfare of the Interpreters and the Deaf Students.

I want to thank the interpreters for their commitment despite the many challenges they have faced this year and for the desire to they have to learn and grow in this profession.

I would also like to thank the stakeholders that are always ready to assist the school in the education of the Deaf students. They are the Gospel School for the Deaf, the Hilton Special School, The Fiji Association of the Deaf, and the Senior Education Officer for Special Education, Ms Litea Naliva.

I would like close by saying that more we are open to learning, the better the services we provide and the more we work together, the more the achievement we can accomplish. United we stand, Divided we fall. We thank God for the wisdom and the knowledge He has bestowed upon us to enable us to do what we do. I pray for God's blessing for the school, our stakeholders, the interpreters and all the students of Gospel High School. May God's Banner fly high not only in the school but in our individual lives.

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