

Linguistic Human Rights of Sign Language Deaf Users: Pitfalls In Integrating The Deaf In National Development

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the need the use of the sign language in Kenya for both the Deaf and non-deaf people. It specifically explores the use of Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) in the integration of the deaf in the society. At the same time, it exposes the societal shortfalls in fully integrating the deaf in the national development based on equal rights. A short description of the notion of linguistic human rights is given and it forms the basis of the perspective of the Deaf sign language users taken in this article. The data is collected from secondary sources like government agencies publications, Non-governmental organizations and newspapers. Memoing is also used for further insights. The article establishes that the linguistic human rights of the deaf signers have been violated up to some extent. Rather than KSL being used as a tool for national cohesion, it has been used to perpetuate discrimination consciously or unconsciously against this minority group. This has resulted in a lack of adequate social, economic and technological opportunities for them. The paper also suggests ten recommendations meant to secure the rights of deaf KSL users in life which include parental counselling, easy access to sign language for families, KSL as a subject in schools and avoiding isolation among others.

Keywords: Sign language, deaf, integration, rights, opportunities, discrimination.