

The SLCO Programme: views from the Deaf teachers

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Co-enrollment or the establishment of twin schools is now considered as a promising alternative in deaf education (Kreimeyer et. al, 2000; Knoors, 2005), especially for fostering the psychosocial development of deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) students (Spencer & Marschark, 2010). A sign bilingual co-enrollment (SLCO) classroom is characterized by: (1) a critical mass of DHH students in the classroom, (2) team-teaching by a general education teacher and a Deaf teacher or a sign bilingual teacher of DHH students, and (3) the use of both signed and spoken languages as the medium of instructions in the classroom (Antia and Metz, 2014, in press).

In 2006, an experimental program called “Jockey Club Sign Bilingualism and Co-enrolment in Deaf Education Programme” was established in Hong Kong, in which a critical mass of around 36 DHH students was integrated in a mainstream primary school. The programme was developed based on two guiding principles: sign bilingualism and co-enrollment. A group of Deaf teachers were integrated into the SLCO programme to co-teach with the hearing teachers. They were involved in both teaching and extra-curriculum activities at the school, having direct contact with both the DHH and hearing students. Thus the Deaf teachers could closely observe their daily classroom learning as well as social interactions among each other. As one of the major stakeholders, it is of interest to understand how the Deaf teachers perceive the impact of this programme on the DHH students.

In this study, seven Deaf teachers who have worked in the SLCO programme from 1 to 6 years were interviewed individually to explore the possible impact of the SLCO programme to the DHH students, with reference to their own learning experience. Thematic analysis of the data showed that: i) the availability of both signed and spoken language as the medium of instructions resulted in increased access of information and participation in the lessons; ii) the cultivated bilingual environment facilitated positive social interactions among DHH and hearing students; and iii) the programme allowed equal access to the mainstream curriculum, without depriving DHH students’ learning opportunities.

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