

On the social integration of deaf and hearing students in the SLCO Programme

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Although inclusive deaf education has become a global trend, one crucial question regarding educating deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) students in a mainstream setting is whether social integration between DHH and hearing students can be achieved. Physical proximity or physical placement alone does not provide sufficient conditions for social inclusion of DHH students in public schools (Antia et al., 2002), and many DHH students placed in mainstream settings individually may perceive themselves as “visitors” rather than “members” of their school/class communities.

The sign bilingual and co-enrollment approach to deaf education attempts to tackle this problem of how DHH students should be educated inclusively in a mainstream setting. This approach rests upon two main strategies: (a) enrolling a critical mass of DHH students in a mainstream setting, and (b) immersing both DHH and hearing students in a sign bilingual classroom that is team taught by a hearing teacher and a deaf teacher.

In this paper, we will present findings on the degree of social acceptance between DHH and hearing students based on three psychosocial measures: (a) peer ratings, (b) hearing students’ attitudes toward DHH students, and (c) DHH students’ attitudes toward their own deafness. Sixteen DHH and 289 hearing students from primary 4 to primary 6 participated in the current study. Results were quite encouraging. Both DHH and hearing students rated each other positively in peer ratings. Further statistical analysis showed that the scores for peer ratings correlated positively with DHH students’ attitudes towards their own deafness, and with positive attitudes towards DHH students by hearing students. Such results offer promising evidence that combining sign bilingualism and co-enrollment in mainstream, inclusive education may be a feasible option in raising and educating DHH students.

References

- Antia, S. D., Stinson, M. S., & Gaustad, M. G. (2002). Developing membership in the education of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in inclusive settings. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, 7*(3), 214-229.