

UNCRPD IMPLEMENTATION IN EUROPE - A DEAF PERSPECTIVE

Article 24:
Education

Editor:
Katja Reuter



UNCRPD Implementation in Europe – A Deaf Perspective

An EUD Series

4

Article 24: Education

Katja Reuter (Editor)

European Union of the Deaf
Brussels, Belgium

European Union of the Deaf (EUD)

Based in Brussels, Belgium, EUD is a not-for-profit European non-governmental organisation (ENGO) comprised of National Associations of the Deaf (NADs). It is the only supranational organisation representing deaf people at a European level, and is one of the few ENGOs representing associations in all 28 EU Member States, as well as Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland.

The primary aim of the organisation is to establish and maintain EU level dialogue with European Union institutions and officials, in consultation and co-operation with its member NADs. EUD has participatory status with the Council of Europe (CoE), operates as a full member of the European Disability Forum (EDF) as well as being a Regional Co-operating Member of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) in tackling issues of global importance. EUD has a consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion at the European Commission financially supports the organisation.

EUD's aim is to achieve equality in public and private life for deaf people all over Europe, so that they can become full citizens in their own right. The organisation's main objectives are:

- The recognition of the right to use an indigenous sign language;
- Empowerment through communication and information; and
- Equality in education and employment.

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1. Introduction

a) The Series – Remarks by the Editor

Katja Reuter

This publication is the fourth book in the EUD publication series, *UNCRPD Implementation in Europe – A Deaf Perspective*. Each book in the series focuses on one article of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and constitutes a joint effort of academics and professionals in this field as well as other stakeholders to fully understand the implications of the UNCRPD in the most practical terms possible.

The first book, *Article 29: Participation in Political and Public Life* (ISBN: 978-2-9601505-0-6), addresses the rights of deaf citizens to full and equal political participation. As an introduction into the book series, it includes academic discourse on the Convention in general and then explores the article itself in relation to the sign language community in Europe. *Article 29: Participation in Political and Public Life* specifically addresses issues such as the role of representative organisations in implementing political participation or the importance of professional sign language interpreting for political participation. It furthermore presents various best practice examples of political participation at the European, regional, and national levels.

The second volume, *Article 27: Work and Employment* (ISBN: 978-2-9601505-1-3), addresses the right of workers with disabilities to employment as enshrined in the Convention. It explores the context of this right to work on an equal basis with others, and the practical applications of the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of on disability for the deaf community. *Article 27: Work and Employment* offers both a general and more academic introduction to the article, including explorations of the term ‘reasonable accommodation’ in view of deaf employment. It furthermore showcases several best practice examples of employment of persons with disabilities from all levels, from European to national and regional.

The third publication in this series, *Article 33: National Implementation and Monitoring* (ISBN: 978-2-9601505-2-0), analyses mechanisms required from State Parties to ensure the practical provision of the rights enshrined by the Convention. It introduces the article from both a more general and academic perspective while presenting how the implementation and monitoring of the CRPD is divided at the EU level. In doing so, *Article 33: National Implementation and Monitoring* largely follows the three subsections of Article 33, representing focal points (governments), independent mechanisms (monitoring organisations), and civil society organisations (Disabled People's Organisations, DPOs). It furthermore describes six different national examples detailing what implementation and/or monitoring of the Convention can look like. *Article 33: National Implementation and Monitoring* finally provides a complete view of the importance of stakeholders within monitoring mechanisms to ensure thorough implementation of a convention.

This fourth volume explores Article 24, the right of people with disabilities to education on an equal level with others. *Article 24: Education* (ISBN: 978-2-9601505-3-7) presents thematic chapters written by authors working on topics related to the education of deaf learners in academia and in practice. It provides a thorough analysis of topics of importance with regards to the provision of education for deaf learners, especially those who use sign language. It furthermore describes several practice examples across Europe at all levels—European, national, and regional—including deaf schools and various forms of inclusive education. The objective of showcasing these examples is to demonstrate how they can each be used to ensure that deaf learners at all age levels have a meaningful, equitable and participatory learning experience in an environment that maximises their academic and social development, as stipulated by Article 24.

This innovative series contributes to understanding the Convention not only in terms of deafness and sign language but also in view of practical implementation. It aims to enable all relevant stakeholders to understand the ramifications of specific articles of the Convention and to work together with policymakers at all levels to implement them.

1. Introduction

b) Welcome

Markku Jokinen, President of the European Union of the Deaf (EUD)

I am delighted to welcome you to this fourth book in the EUD publication series on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). This edition focuses on Article 24, Education. The previous books in this publication series have been very well received, prompting EUD to continue developing more resources such as this book to support the UNCRPD implementation process at European and national levels.

I am excited that EUD has decided to dedicate this edition to Article 24. Education is a fundamental right and constitutes the basis for all development: personal, social, and academic. The provision of fully accessible, quality education for all is thus indispensable in order to provide young persons with the best chances for a good start in life, allowing them to develop into confident, successful citizens. For deaf children, education is a powerful tool, critical to realising their full potential and to promoting individual and collective wellbeing. It allows them to empower themselves and is indispensable to realising other rights.

However, with regards to the education of deaf learners, especially those who use sign language, equal rights and opportunities have yet to be achieved in Europe. Equality in education is thus one of the main objectives of EUD as well as a major topic of interest and work in our national member associations.

Next to providing details on the implementation of Article 24 of the UNCRPD across Europe, this publication also emerges at the right time to provide a European deaf perspective on the UNCRPD Committee's General Comment No 4 on the Right to Inclusive Education, published in August 2016. Providing a more in-depth interpretation of Article 24, it is a highly useful tool that can, however, benefit from further analyses with regards to the requirements needed to ensure that deaf learners have access to, progress in, and succeed in education, on an equal level with others. This book will provide such additional information.

I am very pleased that Commissioner Navracsics is contributing the foreword to this publication. EUD appreciates the continued support of and cooperation with the European Commission in our effort to promote the implementation of the Convention in the best possible way and we look forward to further work and collaboration in this regard.

We hope this publication will serve as inspiration for and provide theoretical and practical guidance as well as best practice examples to stakeholders—decision-makers, civil society and rights holders—at all levels to assist them in their work towards the creation of fully accessible quality learning environments for deaf learners across Europe.

1. Introduction

c) Foreword

**Tibor Navracsics,
European Commissioner for Education, Culture,
Youth and Sports**

It is a pleasure and an honour to introduce this publication, which offers first-hand information and accurate advice on how to provide inclusive quality education for deaf learners in their daily life and, most importantly, stresses the UN Convention's pivotal role in improving national and European policies.

In 2010, the European Union was the first international organisation to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Its Article 24 on education highlights, with regards to learners with sensory disabilities "that the education of persons, and particular children, who are blind, deaf or deaf blind, [shall be] delivered in the most appropriate languages and means of communication for the individual and in environments which maximize academic and social development." In October 2015, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities called on the EU to facilitate access to mainstream inclusive quality education for all students with disabilities.

Schools are the best place to start building integrated communities and workplaces. Inclusive education that enables students of diverse abilities and backgrounds to play, socialise, and learn together teaches respect and understanding of differences. When all children, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, are educated together, everyone benefits. Strengthening the inclusion of learners with disabilities in mainstream classrooms is a positive societal choice. Our goal at EU level is to support Member States in giving a very concrete meaning to "inclusion", making sure that persons with disabilities, and their families, are naturally included in mainstream schools and in our communities. We support measures, which help schools cater to the needs of all learners and which ensure that education is fully accessible and available to all learners. While we have seen progress made in overcoming physical barriers, we often forget about the importance of content. In a school, inaccessible content can exclude pupils as much as a poorly designed building, if not more. In that respect, facilitating the learning and teaching of sign language and promoting the linguistic identity of the deaf community is a fully-fledged part of this inclusion progress, and an explicit obligation under Article 24 of the UN Convention.

This remarkable publication will be of great help to reach this goal, showcasing the variety of educational options that can provide deaf learners with the learning environments referred to by Article 24, as highlighted above. It gives valuable recommendations for policy makers, civil society, school leaders, teachers and other stakeholders, raising awareness regarding the work that remains to be done so that deaf people have equal rights and opportunities in education, empowering them to become confident and fully included citizens, on an equal level with others.

1. Introduction

d) About the editor

Katja Reuter currently works as Policy Officer for the European Union of the Deaf. She is a Master graduate in European Studies. In her master thesis, she focused on EU level cooperation in education and training by analysing the potential of the Open Method of Coordination in Education and Training for European integration. Previous professional experience includes internships at the “European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education” and the Brussels office of the German Bank for Social Economy. In 2013, she was a Blue Book Trainee in the Unit working on the Rights of People with Disabilities of the European Commission (formerly in its Directorate-General Justice). She also worked as a Senior Communication Officer at the Europe Direct Contact Centre, the official information service of the European Union, providing tailored information to citizens’, policy-makers’, and civil society organisations’ questions on the EU.

At EUD, she is responsible for monitoring EU policy-making procedures of interest for the European deaf community and for writing EUD amendments to draft EU legislation to ensure the respect of deaf rights in EU law. Linked to this, she is tasked with creating and implementing EUD advocacy strategies to that effect. She also follows up on the implementation of the UNCRPD at European and national levels. Furthermore, she is responsible for writing EUD policy documents and analyses.

1. Introduction

e) Acknowledgements

I am very proud to present this fourth book in the EUD publication series, which is the first book in the series that I have edited. I appreciate having had the opportunity to address the challenging topic of deaf education, which is a central priority for our national member associations and the deaf community.

First, I would like to express my gratitude to each of the authors who have taken time out of their professional lives to contribute their knowledge and experience by writing a chapter for this book, addressing the crucial importance of a fully accessible, quality bilingual education for deaf learners—to the same level as other learners—that will prepare them for equal life opportunities.

I would also like to thank each member of the current and former EUD Board for their support and feedback, especially in the early phases of the book, while specifically thanking EUD President Dr Markku Jokinen. As an expert in deaf education, he acted as a second reviewer to the book, reading all articles and providing useful input. I would also like to acknowledge the WFD expert group's input to one of the book's articles. I am also grateful to our national member associations who have provided me with national recommendations for practice examples for this book.

I am very grateful for the support of the EUD Staff. Special thanks go to Executive Director Mark Wheatley for contributing his own article to the book as well as for typesetting all the documents and compiling them into a readable book. I would also like to thank Communication and Media Officer David Hay for arranging for the design and printing, thus freeing me to focus on editorial oversight. Both I and this text are deeply indebted to our In-House Sign Language Interpreter Romy O'Callaghan for ensuring smooth communication during various lengthy and complex thematic discussions with the EUD Staff and Board, for being available as a sounding board to discuss content and answer English language questions, for proof-reading several articles and for lending an ear when I needed to vent. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to EUD Policy Assistant Martyna Balčiūnaitė for volunteering to take over many of my policy-related tasks allowing me to fully engage in my editorial work, for her help with several editorial tasks and her input during numerous discussions on the book's content. I would like to thank EUD Project Officer Frankie Picron for his great sense of humour and for regularly lightening up the mood in the office. I would also like to thank former EUD Policy Officers and UNCRPD book series editors Annika Pabsch and

Petra Söderqvist for allowing me to pick their brains and to benefit from their experience and advice in the preparatory phase of this book.

I would like to acknowledge our proof-reader Annie Bolger for a great collaboration, her swift feedback and good standard of work. I would also like to thank Simon Bak for coming up with an imaginative design for yet another book cover.

I also want to thank the European Commission for the funding it provides to EUD through its Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme, which supports the publication of this series. A special thank you goes to the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor Navracsics, who contributed the foreword for this book.

Last, not least, I am especially grateful to my partner Bob Blasdel for his constant emotional support and for always being there with good advice when I got stuck on a problem. I am very grateful for his practical help in each phase of my editorial work, be it discussing thematic issues at length, proof-reading some of my work or answering yet another English language question; in short, for being “my rock” and my “handy academic on retainer” at all times.

It is very much appreciated that so many people are interested in and dedicated to the publication of this series on the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) from a European deaf perspective. It clearly demonstrates that the full implementation of the Convention is indeed a priority for people and an important tool towards achieving equal rights of deaf people in Europe as well as globally.

1. Introduction

f) Executive Summary

This fourth book of the EUD publication series, which explores the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) from a European deaf perspective, focuses specifically on Article 24 and Education.

Most importantly, from a deaf perspective, Article 24 paragraphs 3 (b) & (c) highlight the obligation to facilitate “the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community” as well as to ensure “that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.” This book’s central objective is to analyse these and other relevant paragraphs of Article 24 in order to highlight elements required to ensure the full and adequate implementation of these rights, as well as of the UNCRPD committee’s “General Comment No 4 on the Right to Inclusive Education.” This book aims to point out requirements that EUD considers necessary to ensure that deaf learners of all ages have a meaningful, equitable, and participatory learning experience in an environment that maximises their academic and social development, as stipulated by Article 24.

UNCRPD Implementation in Europe – A deaf perspective. Article 24: Education is divided into three main parts. The introduction contains the full text of Article 24 as well as of the UNCRPD committee’s General Comment No 4 on the Right to Inclusive Education. This was the first time that a General Comment had been published on the topic that is addressed in a book of this series. General Comments provide a more in-depth interpretation of the article in question for State Parties and relevant stakeholders and are therefore intended to influence the implementation of the article. For this reason, both texts are analysed throughout the publication. The second part explores the topic of deaf education from an academic perspective, analysing aspects of Article 24 as well as General Comment No 4. It addresses an array of measures that must be adequately realised in order for an education environment to be considered fully accessible for deaf learners, especially those who use sign language. Only fully accessible environments provide deaf learners with the potential for equal academic, cultural, personal and social development. The third part contains descriptions of practice examples of different accessible bilingual quality education environments for deaf learners—ranging from deaf schools to inclusive schools—highlighting the diversity of options that already exist across Europe.

This innovative series provides a deeper understanding of the UNCRPD from a European deaf perspective, not only in terms of deafness and the importance of sign language, but also with a view toward the practical implementation of specific articles of the Convention, here Article 24 on education. This book is intended to serve as a guide for stakeholders at all levels, including education policy-makers, national associations of the deaf, school leaders, teachers, parents and young deaf learners themselves by providing insights into how to ensure fully accessible quality education for deaf persons. It thus has the potential to act as a conduit for the appropriate implementation of Article 24 of the Convention and contribute to the creation of a Europe that provides equal access as well as equal rights and opportunities for all its citizens.

1. Introduction

g) Methodology

Authors and practice examples for this book were chosen based on a two-fold methodology. First, authors with expertise in specific relevant topic areas as well as interesting good practice examples from across Europe were identified. Research outreach was naturally limited to the editor's written language knowledge and research was thus conducted in English, French, Spanish, and German. In order to include a larger geographic variety of good practice examples, we also asked various stakeholders, including the EUD board and staff as well as EUD's National member Associations of the Deaf (NADs) to provide recommendations for authors and good practice examples. Based on the recommendations we received, we contacted further authors and schools and included articles that fulfilled the following criteria:

- a) They described a topic or example considered relevant and of interest for the book;
- b) Authors/settings in question responded to our request and agreed to submit an article;
- c) Articles of high quality could be submitted in English within the required deadlines.

“Topics or examples considered relevant and of interest” were those that allowed us to address relevant aspects of providing fully accessible quality bilingual education. Furthermore, we aimed to ensure geographical representation as well as to showcase a variety of age groups and education types (from early childhood education to tertiary education, formal as well as informal education). The described examples—ranging from deaf schools to inclusive education—successfully address the challenge of creating fully accessible quality bilingual education environments for deaf learners.

1. Introduction

h) Article 24: Education **United Nations Convention on the Rights of** **Persons with Disabilities**

The full text is available on the UN website (in PDF and accessible Word format, as well as in several sign languages): <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:

- a. The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
- b. The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
- c. Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.

2. In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:

- a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
- b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
- c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
- d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;

e) Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:

a) Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;

b) Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;

c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.

4. In order to help ensure the realization of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.

5. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.

1. Introduction

i) General comment No 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education

The full text is available on the UN website (in PDF and accessible Word format): http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD/C/GC/4&Lang=en

I. Introduction

1. Historically viewed as welfare recipients, persons with disabilities are now recognized under international law as rights holders with a claim to the right to education without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunities. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the World Declaration on Education for All (1990), the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) and the Salamanca statement and framework for action (1994) all include measures testifying to the growing awareness and understanding of the right of persons with disabilities to education.

2. Recognition of inclusion as the key to achieving the right to education has strengthened over the past 30 years and is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the first legally binding instrument to contain a reference to the concept of quality inclusive education. Sustainable Development Goal 4 too affirms the value of inclusive, quality and equitable education. Inclusive education is central to achieving high-quality education for all learners, including those with disabilities, and for the development of inclusive, peaceful and fair societies. Furthermore, there is a powerful educational, social and economic case to be made. As reflected in the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the thematic study on the right of persons with disabilities to education, only inclusive education can provide both quality education and social development for persons with disabilities, and a guarantee of universality and non-discrimination in the right to education.¹

3. Despite the progress achieved, however, the Committee is concerned that profound challenges persist. Many millions of persons with disabilities continue to be denied the right to education and for many more education is available only in settings where persons with disabilities are isolated from their peers and where the education they receive is of an inferior quality.

1 See A/HRC/25/29 and Corr.1, paras. 3 and 68.

4. Barriers that impede access to inclusive education for persons with disabilities can be attributed to multiple factors, including:

(a) The failure to understand or implement the human rights model of disability, according to which barriers within the community and society, rather than personal impairments, exclude persons with disabilities;

(b) Persistent discrimination against persons with disabilities, compounded by the isolation of those still living in long-term residential institutions, and low expectations about those in mainstream settings, allowing prejudices and fear to escalate and remain unchallenged;

(c) Lack of knowledge about the nature and advantages of inclusive and quality education and diversity, including regarding competitiveness, in learning for all; lack of outreach to all parents; and lack of appropriate responses to support requirements, leading to misplaced fears and stereotypes that inclusion will cause a deterioration in the quality of education or otherwise have a negative impact on others;

(d) Lack of disaggregated data and research (both of which are necessary for accountability and programme development), which impedes the development of effective policies and interventions to promote inclusive and quality education;

(e) Lack of political will, technical knowledge and capacity in implementing the right to inclusive education, including insufficient education of all teaching staff;

(f) Inappropriate and inadequate funding mechanisms to provide incentives and reasonable accommodations for the inclusion of students with disabilities, interministerial coordination, support and sustainability;

(g) Lack of legal remedies and mechanisms to claim redress for violations.

5. States parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities must have regard for the underlying general principles of the Convention in all measures taken to implement inclusive education and must ensure that both the process and outcomes of developing an inclusive education system comply with article 3.

6. The present general comment is applicable to all persons with actual or perceived disabilities.² The Committee recognizes that some groups are more at risk of exclusion from education than others, such as: persons with intellectual disabilities or multiple disabilities, persons who are deafblind, persons with autism or persons with disabilities in humanitarian emergencies.

7. Consistent with article 4 (3), States parties must consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in all aspects of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of inclusive education policies. Persons with disabilities and, when appropriate, their families, must be recognized as partners and not merely recipients of education.

II. Normative content of article 24

8. In accordance with article 24 (1), States parties must ensure the realization of the right of persons with disabilities to education through an inclusive education system at all levels, including preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary education, vocational training and lifelong learning, extracurricular and social activities, and for all students, including persons with disabilities, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others.

9. Ensuring the right to inclusive education entails a transformation in culture, policy and practice in all formal and informal educational environments to accommodate the differing requirements and identities of individual students, together with a commitment to removing the barriers that impede that possibility. It involves strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners. It focuses on the full and effective participation, accessibility, attendance and achievement of all students, especially those who, for different reasons, are excluded or at risk of being marginalized. Inclusion involves access to and progress in high-quality formal and informal education without discrimination. Inclusion seeks to enable communities, systems and structures to combat discrimination, including harmful stereotypes, recognize diversity, promote participation and overcome barriers to learning and participation for all by focusing on the well-being and success of students with disabilities. It requires an in-depth transformation of education systems in legislation, policy and the mechanisms for financing, administering, designing, delivering and monitoring education.

2 Art. 1 (2) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

10. Inclusive education is to be understood as:

(a) A fundamental human right of all learners. Notably, education is the right of the individual learner and not, in the case of children, the right of a parent or caregiver. Parental responsibilities in this regard are subordinate to the rights of the child;

(b) A principle that values the well-being of all students, respects their inherent dignity and autonomy, and acknowledges individuals' requirements and their ability to effectively be included in and contribute to society;

(c) A means of realizing other human rights. It is the primary means by which persons with disabilities can lift themselves out of poverty, obtain the means to participate fully in their communities and be safeguarded from exploitation.³ It is also the primary means of achieving inclusive societies;

(d) The result of a process of continuing and proactive commitment to eliminating barriers impeding the right to education, together with changes to culture, policy and practice of regular schools to accommodate and effectively include all students.

11. The Committee highlights the importance of recognizing the differences between exclusion, segregation, integration and inclusion. Exclusion occurs when students are directly or indirectly prevented from or denied access to education in any form. Segregation occurs when the education of students with disabilities is provided in separate environments designed or used to respond to a particular impairment or to various impairments, in isolation from students without disabilities. Integration is the process of placing persons with disabilities in existing mainstream educational institutions with the understanding that they can adjust to the standardized requirements of such institutions.⁴ Inclusion involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and the environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences. Placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes without accompanying structural changes to, for example, organization,

3 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 13 (1999) on the right to education.

4 See A/HRC/25/29 and Corr.1, para. 4, and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: a Rights-based Approach to Inclusive Education* (Geneva, 2012).

curriculum and teaching and learning strategies, does not constitute inclusion. Furthermore, integration does not automatically guarantee the transition from segregation to inclusion.

12. The core features of inclusive education are:

(a) A “whole systems” approach: education ministries must ensure that all resources are invested in advancing inclusive education and in introducing and embedding the necessary changes in institutional culture, policies and practices;

(b) A “whole educational environment”: the committed leadership of educational institutions is essential for introducing and embedding the culture, policies and practices needed to achieve inclusive education at all levels and in all areas, including in classroom teaching and relationships, board meetings, teacher supervision, counselling services and medical care, school trips, budgetary allocations, any interaction with the parents of learners with and without disabilities and, when applicable, the local community or wider public;

(c) A “whole person” approach: recognition is given to the capacity of every person to learn, and high expectations are established for all learners, including learners with disabilities. Inclusive education offers flexible curricula and teaching and learning methods adapted to different strengths, requirements and learning styles. This approach implies the provision of support, reasonable accommodation and early intervention so that all learners are able to fulfil their potential. The focus is on learners’ capacities and aspirations rather than on content when planning teaching activities. The “whole person” approach aims at ending segregation within educational settings by ensuring inclusive classroom teaching in accessible learning environments with appropriate supports. The education system must provide a personalized educational response, rather than expect students to fit the system;

(d) Supported teachers: all teachers and other staff receive the education and training they need to give them the core values and competencies to accommodate inclusive learning environments, which include teachers with disabilities. An inclusive culture provides an accessible and supportive environment that encourages working through collaboration, interaction and problem-solving;

(e) Respect for and value of diversity: all members of the learning community are equally welcome and must be shown respect for diversity irrespective of disability, race, colour, sex, language, linguistic culture, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic, indigenous or social origin, property, birth, age or other status. All students must feel

valued, respected, included and listened to. Effective measures to prevent abuse and bullying are in place. Inclusion takes an individual approach to students;

(f) A learning-friendly environment: inclusive learning environments are accessible environments where everyone feels safe, supported, stimulated and able to express themselves and where there is a strong emphasis on involving students in building a positive school community. Recognition is afforded to the peer group in learning, building positive relationships, friendships and acceptance;

(g) Effective transitions: learners with disabilities receive support to ensure the effective transition from learning at school to vocational and tertiary education and, finally, to work. Learners' capacities and confidence are developed and learners receive reasonable accommodation, are treated with equality in assessments and examination procedures, and their capacities and attainments are certified on an equal basis with others;

(h) Recognition of partnerships: teacher associations, student associations and federations, organizations of persons with disabilities, school boards, parent-teacher associations and other functioning school support groups, both formal and informal, are all encouraged to increase understanding and knowledge of disability. The involvement of parents or caregivers and the community is viewed as an asset that contributes resources and strengths. The relationship between the learning environment and the wider community must be recognized as a route towards inclusive societies;

(i) Monitoring: as a continuing process, inclusive education must be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that neither segregation nor integration are taking place, either formally or informally. According to article 33, monitoring should involve persons with disabilities, including children and persons with intensive support requirements, through their representative organizations, as well as parents or caregivers of children with disabilities, where appropriate. Disability-inclusive indicators must be developed and used in a manner consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

13. Consistent with the Convention against Discrimination in Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and in order to give effect to article 24 (1) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, States parties must ensure that the right to education is assured without discrimination and on the basis of equality of opportunity. States parties must prohibit all discrimination on the basis of disability and guarantee to all persons

with disabilities equal and effective protection against discrimination on all grounds. Persons with disabilities can experience intersectional discrimination on the basis of disability, gender, religion, legal status, ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation or language. In addition, parents, siblings and other relatives can also experience discrimination on grounds of disability by association. The measures needed to address all forms of discrimination include identifying and removing legal, physical, communication and linguistic, social, financial and attitudinal barriers within educational institutions and the community. The right to non-discrimination includes the right not to be segregated and to be provided with reasonable accommodation and must be understood in the context of the duty to provide accessible learning environments and reasonable accommodation.

14. Situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters have a disproportionate impact on the right to inclusive education. States parties should adopt inclusive disaster risk reduction strategies for comprehensive school safety and security in emergencies that are sensitive to learners with disabilities. Temporary learning environments in such contexts must ensure the right of persons with disabilities, in particular children with disabilities, to education on the basis of equality with others. They must include accessible educational materials, school facilities, counselling and access to training in the local sign language for deaf learners. In accordance with article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and given the heightened risk of sexual violence in such settings, measures must be taken to ensure that learning environments are safe and accessible for women and girls with disabilities. Learners with disabilities must not be denied access to educational establishments on the basis that evacuating them in emergency situations would be impossible, and reasonable accommodation must be provided.

15. For article 24 (1) (a) to be realized, and in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, education must be directed at the full development of the human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights and human diversity. States parties must ensure that education conforms to the aims and objectives of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as interpreted in the light of the World Declaration on Education for All (art. 1), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (art. 29 (1)), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (Part I, para. 33, and Part II, para. 80) and the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (para. 2). These texts include additional elements such as references to

gender equality and respect for the environment.⁵ Ensuring the right to education is a matter of access as well as content, and efforts should be directed at upholding a wide range of values, including understanding and tolerance.⁶ Inclusive education must aim at promoting mutual respect and value for all persons and at building educational environments in which the approach to learning, the culture of the educational institution and the curriculum itself reflect the value of diversity.

16. For article 24 (1) (b) to be implemented, education should be directed to the development of the personality, talents and creativity of persons with disabilities, as well as of their mental, physical and communicational abilities, to their fullest potential. The education of persons with disabilities too often focuses on a deficit approach, on their actual or perceived impairment and on limiting opportunities to pre-defined and negative assumptions of their potential. States parties must support the creation of opportunities to build on the unique strengths and talents of each individual with a disability.

17. For article 24 (1) (c) to be realized, the aims of education must be directed at enabling persons with disabilities to participate fully and effectively in a free society. Recalling article 23 (3) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Committee stresses that, regarding children with disabilities, assistance must be provided to ensure that they have effective access to education in a manner conducive to achieving their fullest possible social integration and individual development. States parties must recognize that individual support and reasonable accommodation are priority matters and should be free of charge at all compulsory levels of education.

18. For article 24 (2) (a) to be implemented, the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the general education system should be prohibited, including through any legislative or regulatory provisions that limit their inclusion on the basis of their impairment or the degree of that impairment, such as by conditioning inclusion on the extent of the potential of the individual or by alleging a disproportionate and undue burden to evade the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation. General education means all regular learning environments and the education department. Direct exclusion would be to classify certain students as “non-educable” and thereby ineligible for access to education. Indirect exclusion would be imposing a requirement to pass a common test as a condition for school entry without reasonable accommodations and support.

5 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 13.

6 Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 1 (2001) on the aims of education.

19. For article 4 (1) (b) of the Convention to be implemented, States parties should take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that constitute discrimination against persons with disabilities and that are in violation of article 24. Where necessary, discriminatory laws, regulations, customs and practices should be repealed or amended in a systematic and time-bound manner.

20. For article 24 (2) (b) to be realized, persons with disabilities must have access to inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education and be able to transition smoothly between the two on an equal basis with others in the communities where they live. The Committee draws on the recommendation of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that, to fulfil that obligation, the education system must comprise four interrelated features: availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability.⁷

Availability

21. Public and private educational institutions and programmes must be available in sufficient quantity and quality. States parties must guarantee a broad availability of educational places for learners with disabilities at all levels throughout the community.

Accessibility

22. Consistent with article 9 of the Convention and with the Committee's general comment No. 2 (2014) on accessibility, educational institutions and programmes must be accessible to everyone, without discrimination. The entire education system must be accessible, including buildings, information and communications tools (comprising ambient or frequency modulation assistive systems), the curriculum, educational materials, teaching methods, assessments and language and support services. The environment of students with disabilities must be designed to foster inclusion and guarantee their equality throughout their education.⁸ For example, school transportation, water and sanitation facilities (including hygiene and toilet facilities), school cafeterias and recreational spaces should be inclusive, accessible and safe. States parties must commit to the prompt introduction of universal design. States parties should prohibit and sanction the building of any future education infrastructure that is inaccessible and establish an efficient monitoring mechanism and time frame for rendering all existing education environments accessible. States parties must also commit to the provision of reasonable accommodation

7 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 13.

8 Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, general comment No. 2.

in education environments when so required. The universal design approach does not exclude the provision of assistive devices, applications and software to those learners with disabilities who may require them. Accessibility is a dynamic concept and its application requires periodic regulatory and technical adjustments. States parties must ensure that the rapid development of innovations and new technologies designed to enhance learning are accessible to all students, including those with disabilities.

23. The Committee highlights the widespread lack of textbooks and learning materials in accessible formats and languages, including sign language. States parties must invest in the timely development of resources in ink or Braille and in digital formats, including through the use of innovative technology. They should also consider developing standards and guidelines for the conversion of printed material into accessible formats and languages and making accessibility a central aspect of education-related procurement. The Committee calls upon States parties to urgently ratify and implement the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled.

24. Accessibility requires that education at all levels be affordable for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodation should not entail additional costs for learners with disabilities. Compulsory, quality, free and accessible primary education is an immediate obligation. In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, States parties must progressively adopt measures to ensure that all children, including children with disabilities, complete free, equitable and quality secondary education and to ensure equal access for all women and men with disabilities to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university, and lifelong learning. States parties must ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access education in both public and private academic institutions on an equal basis with others.

Acceptability

25. Acceptability is the obligation to design and implement all education-related facilities, goods and services taking fully into account and respecting the requirements, cultures, views and languages of persons with disabilities. The form and substance of education provided must be acceptable to all. States parties must adopt affirmative action measures to ensure that education is of good quality for all.⁹ Inclusion and quality are reciprocal: an inclusive approach can make a significant contribution to the quality of education.

9 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 13.

Adaptability

26. The Committee encourages States parties to adopt the universal design for learning approach, which consists of a set of principles providing teachers and other staff with a structure for creating adaptable learning environments and developing instruction to meet the diverse needs of all learners. It recognizes that each student learns in a unique manner and involves: developing flexible ways to learn, creating an engaging classroom environment; maintaining high expectations for all students while allowing for multiple ways to meet expectations; empowering teachers to think differently about their own teaching; and focusing on educational outcomes for all, including persons with disabilities. Curricula must be conceived, designed and implemented in such a way as to meet and adjust to the requirements of every student, and provide appropriate educational responses. Standardized assessments must be replaced with flexible and multiple forms of assessments and the recognition of individual progress towards broad goals that provide alternative routes for learning.

27. In accordance with article 24 (2) (b) of the Convention, persons with disabilities must be able to attend primary and secondary schools in the communities where they live. Students should not be sent away from home. The educational environment must be within safe physical reach for persons with disabilities and include safe and secure means of transportation; alternatively, it must be accessible through information and communications technologies. However, States parties should avoid relying exclusively on technology as a substitute for the direct involvement of students with disabilities and interaction with teachers and role models within the educational environment. Active participation with other students, including siblings of learners with disabilities, is an important component of the right to inclusive education.

28. In accordance with article 24 (2) (c), States parties must provide reasonable accommodation to enable individual students to have access to education on an equal basis with others. “Reasonableness” is understood as the result of a contextual test that involves an analysis of the relevance and the effectiveness of the accommodation and the expected goal of countering discrimination. The availability of resources and financial implications is recognized when assessing disproportionate burden. The duty to provide reasonable accommodation is enforceable from the moment a request for such accommodation is made.¹⁰ Policies that commit to reasonable accommodation must be adopted at the national, local and educational institution levels, and at all levels of education. The extent to which reasonable accommodation is provided must be considered in the light of the overall obligation to develop an inclusive education system,

10 Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, general comment No. 2.

maximizing the use of existing resources and developing new ones. Using a lack of resources and the existence of financial crises to justify failure to make progress towards inclusive education violates article 24.

29. The Committee reiterates the distinction between the general accessibility duty and the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation.¹¹ Accessibility benefits groups of the population and is based on a set of standards that are implemented gradually. Disproportionality or undue burden cannot be claimed to defend the failure to provide accessibility. Reasonable accommodation relates to an individual and is complementary to the accessibility duty. An individual can legitimately request reasonable accommodation measures even if the State party has fulfilled its accessibility duty.

30. The definition of what is proportionate will necessarily vary according to context. The availability of accommodations should be considered with respect to a larger pool of educational resources available in the education system and not limited to resources available at the academic institution in question; transfer of resources within the system should be possible. There is no “one size fits all” formula to reasonable accommodation, as different students with the same impairment may require different accommodations. Accommodations may include: changing the location of a class; providing different forms of in-class communication; enlarging print, materials and/or subjects in signs, or providing handouts in an alternative format; and providing students with a note taker or a language interpreter or allowing students to use assistive technology in learning and assessment situations. Provision of non-material accommodations, such as allowing a student more time, reducing levels of background noise (sensitivity to sensory overload), using alternative evaluation methods and replacing an element of the curriculum with an alternative must also be considered. To ensure that the accommodation meets the requirements, will, preferences and choices of students and can be implemented by the institution provider, discussions must take place between the educational authorities and providers, the academic institution, students with disabilities and, depending on the students’ age and capacity, if appropriate, their parents, caregivers or other family members. Provision of reasonable accommodation may not be conditional on a medical diagnosis of impairment and should be based instead on the evaluation of social barriers to education.

31. The denial of reasonable accommodation constitutes discrimination and the duty to provide reasonable accommodation is immediately applicable and not subject to progressive realization. States parties must ensure that independent systems are in place to monitor

¹¹ Ibid.

the appropriateness and effectiveness of accommodations and provide safe, timely and accessible mechanisms for redress when students with disabilities and, if relevant, their families, consider that they have not been adequately provided or have experienced discrimination. Measures to protect victims of discrimination against victimization during the redress process are essential.

32. For article 24 (2) (d) to be implemented, students with disabilities should be entitled to the support they require to facilitate their effective education and enable them to fulfil their potential on an equal basis with others. Support in terms of general availability of services and facilities within the education system should ensure that students with disabilities are able to fulfil their potential to the maximum extent possible, including, for example, the provision of sufficiently trained and supported teaching staff, school counsellors, psychologists and other relevant health and social service professionals, as well as access to scholarships and financial resources.

33. For article 24 (2) (e) to be realized, adequate, continuous and personalized support is to be provided directly. The Committee emphasizes the need to provide individualized education plans that can identify the reasonable accommodations and specific support required by individual students, including the provision of assistive compensatory aids, specific learning materials in alternative/accessible formats, modes and means of communication, communication aids and assistive and information technology. Support can also consist of a qualified learning support assistant, either on a shared or on a one-to-one basis, depending on the requirements of the student. Individualized education plans must address the transitions experienced by learners who move from segregated to mainstream settings and between levels of education. The effectiveness of such plans should be regularly monitored and evaluated with the direct involvement of the learner concerned. The nature of the provision must be determined in collaboration with the student, together, where appropriate, with the parents, caregivers or other third parties. The learner must have access to recourse mechanisms if the support is unavailable or inadequate.

34. Any support measures provided must be compliant with the goal of inclusion. Accordingly, they must be designed to strengthen opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in the classroom and in out-of-school activities alongside their peers, rather than marginalize them.

35. Regarding article 24 (3), many States parties are failing to make appropriate provision for persons with disabilities, in particular persons on the autism spectrum, those with communication impairments and those with sensory disabilities, to acquire the life, language and social skills essential for participation in education and within their communities:

(a) Blind and partially sighted students must be provided with opportunities to learn Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, as well as orientation and mobility skills. Investment in access to appropriate technology and alternative communication systems to facilitate learning should be supported. Peer support and mentoring schemes should be introduced and encouraged;

(b) Deaf and hard-of-hearing students must be provided with the opportunity to learn sign language and measures must be taken to recognize and promote the linguistic identity of the deaf community. The Committee draws the attention of States parties to the Convention against Discrimination in Education, which establishes the right of children to be taught in their own language, and reminds States parties that, in line with article 30 (4) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, persons with disabilities are entitled, on an equal basis with others, to recognition of and support for their specific cultural and linguistic identity, including sign languages and deaf culture. In addition, hard-of-hearing students must also have access to quality speech therapy services, induction loop technology and captioning;

(c) Students who are blind, deaf or deafblind must be provided with education delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize personal, academic and social development both within and outside formal school settings. The Committee emphasizes that, for such inclusive environments to exist, States parties should provide the required support, including by way of resources, assistive technology and orientation and mobility skills;

(d) Learners with communication impairments must be provided with the opportunity to express themselves and learn using alternative or augmentative communication. This may include the provision of sign language, low- or high-technology communication aids such as tablets with speech output, voice output communication aids or communication books. States parties should invest in developing expertise, technology and services in order to promote access to appropriate technology and alternative communication systems to facilitate learning;

(e) Learners with social communication difficulties must be supported through adaptations to classroom organization, including work in pairs, peer tutoring, seating close to the teacher and the creation of a structured and predictable environment;

(f) Learners with intellectual impairments must be provided with concrete, observable/visual and easy-to-read teaching and learning

materials within a safe, quiet and structured learning environment, targeting capacities that will best prepare students for independent living and vocational contexts. States parties should invest in inclusive interactive classrooms where use is made of alternative instructional strategies and assessment methods.

36. To realize article 24(4), States parties are required to take appropriate measures to employ administration, teaching and non-teaching staff with the skills to work effectively in inclusive education environments, qualified in sign language and/or Braille and with orientation and mobility skills. Having an adequate number of qualified and committed school staff is key to the introduction and sustainability of inclusive education. Lack of understanding and capacity remain significant barriers to inclusion. States parties must ensure that all teachers are trained in inclusive education and that that training is based on the human rights model of disability.

37. States parties must invest in and support the recruitment and continuous education of teachers with disabilities. This includes removing any legislative or policy barriers requiring candidates to fulfil specific medical eligibility criteria and the provision of reasonable accommodations for their participation as teachers. Their presence will serve to promote equal rights for persons with disabilities to enter the teaching profession, bring unique expertise and skills into learning environments, contribute to breaking down barriers and serve as important role models.

38. To give effect to article 24 (5), States parties should ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. Attitudinal, physical, linguistic, communication, financial, legal and other barriers to education at these levels must be identified and removed in order to ensure equal access. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to ensure that persons with disabilities do not face discrimination. States parties should consider taking affirmative action measures in tertiary education in favour of learners with disabilities.

III. Obligations of States parties

39. States parties should respect, protect and fulfil each of the essential features of the right to inclusive education: availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability. The obligation to respect requires avoiding measures that hinder the enjoyment of the right, such as legislation excluding certain children with disabilities from education, or the denial of accessibility or reasonable accommodation. The obligation to protect requires taking measures that prevent third parties from interfering with the enjoyment of the right, for example, parents refusing to send girls with

disabilities to school, or private institutions refusing to enroll persons with disabilities on the basis of their impairment. The obligation to fulfil requires taking measures that enable and assist persons with disabilities to enjoy the right to education, for example, ensuring that educational institutions are accessible and that education systems are adapted appropriately with resources and services.

40. Article 4 (2) requires that States parties take measures to the maximum of their available resources regarding economic, social and cultural rights and, where needed, within a framework of international cooperation, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of those rights. Progressive realization means that States parties have a specific and continuing obligation to move as expeditiously and effectively as possible towards the full realization of article 24.¹² This is not compatible with sustaining two systems of education: a mainstream education system and a special/segregated education system. Progressive realization must be read in conjunction with the overall objective of the Convention to establish clear obligations for States parties in respect of the full realization of the rights in question. Similarly, States parties are encouraged to redefine budgetary allocations for education, including by transferring part of their budgets to the development of inclusive education. Any deliberately retrogressive measures in that regard must not disproportionately target learners with disabilities at any level of education.¹³ They must be only a temporary measure limited to the period of crisis, be necessary and proportionate, not be discriminatory and comprise all possible measures to mitigate inequalities.¹⁴

41. Progressive realization does not prejudice those obligations that are immediately applicable. As the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has stated in its general comment No. 3 (1990) on the nature of States parties' obligations, States parties have a minimum core obligation to ensure the satisfaction of, at the very least, minimum essential levels of each aspect of the right to education.¹⁵ Therefore, States parties should implement the following core rights with immediate effect:

(a) Non-discrimination in all aspects of education and encompassing all internationally prohibited grounds of discrimination. States parties must ensure non-exclusion from education for persons with

12 See Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 3 (1990) on the nature of States parties' obligations, para. 9.

13 Ibid.

14 Letter dated 16 May 2012 by the Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights addressed to States parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

15 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 3.

disabilities and eliminate structural disadvantages to achieve effective participation and equality for all persons with disabilities. They must urgently take steps to remove all legal, administrative and other forms of discrimination impeding the right of access to inclusive education. The adoption of affirmative action measures does not constitute a violation of the right to non-discrimination with regard to education, so long as such measures do not lead to the maintenance of unequal or separate standards for different groups;

(b) Reasonable accommodations to ensure non-exclusion from education for persons with disabilities. Failure to provide reasonable accommodation constitutes discrimination on the ground of disability;

(c) Compulsory, free primary education available to all. States parties must take all appropriate measures to guarantee that right, on the basis of inclusion, to all children and youth with disabilities. The Committee urges States parties to ensure access to and completion of quality education for all children and youth to at least 12 years of free, publicly funded, inclusive and equitable quality primary and secondary education, of which at least nine years are compulsory, as well as access to quality education for out-of-school children and youth through a range of modalities, as outlined in the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

42. States parties must adopt and implement a national educational strategy that includes the provision of education at all levels for all learners, on a basis of inclusion and equality of opportunity. The educational objectives set out in article 24 (1) place equivalent obligations on States parties and must therefore be regarded on a comparable basis of immediacy.

43. With regard to international cooperation, and in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the Education 2030 Framework for Action, all bilateral and multilateral cooperation must aim to advance inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, including support for capacity-building, information-sharing and the exchange of best practices, research, technical and economic assistance, and access to accessible and assistive technologies. All data collected and all international assistance spent on education should be disaggregated by impairment. Consideration of an international coordination mechanism on inclusive education to implement Goal 4 and to build evidence will contribute to a better policy dialogue and to monitoring progress.

IV. Relationship with other provisions of the Convention

44. States parties must recognize the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights. Education is integral to the full and effective realization of other rights.¹⁶ Conversely, the right to inclusive education can only be realized if certain other rights are implemented. Moreover, the right to inclusive education must be underpinned by the creation of inclusive environments throughout society. This will require the adoption of the human rights model of disability, which recognizes the obligation to remove societal barriers that serve to exclude and marginalize persons with disabilities and the need to adopt measures to ensure implementation of the rights set out below.

45. Article 5 enshrines the principle of equal protection of all persons before and under the law. States parties must prohibit all disability-based discrimination and provide persons with disabilities effective and equal protection against discrimination on all grounds. To address systemic and structural discrimination and to ensure “equal benefit of the law”, States parties must take affirmative action measures, such as removing architectural and communicative or other barriers to mainstream education.

46. Article 6 recognizes that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination and that States parties must adopt measures to ensure the equal enjoyment of their rights. Intersectional discrimination and exclusion pose significant barriers to the realization of the right to education for women and girls with disabilities. States parties must identify and remove those barriers, including gender-based violence and the lack of value placed on the education of women and girls, and put in place specific measures to ensure that the right to education is not impeded by gender and/or disability discrimination, stigma or prejudice. Harmful gender and/or disability stereotypes in textbooks and curricula must be eliminated. Education plays a vital role in combating traditional notions of gender that perpetuate patriarchal and paternalistic societal frameworks.¹⁷ States parties must ensure access for and the retention of girls and women with disabilities in education and rehabilitation services, as instruments for their development, advancement and empowerment.

47. Article 7 asserts that, in all actions concerning children with disabilities, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. The concept of best interests is aimed at ensuring the full and effective

16 Ibid., general comment No. 11 (1999) on plans of action for primary education and general comment No. 13.

17 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, “Concept note on the draft general recommendation on girls’/women’s right to education” (2014).

enjoyment by the child of all human rights and the child's holistic development.¹⁸ Any determination of the best interests of a child with a disability must consider the child's own views and individual identity, the preservation of the family, care, protection and safety of the child, any particular vulnerability, and the child's right to health and education. The Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms that the best interests of the child must be the basis on which education policies and provisions are determined. Article 7 (3) further asserts that children with disabilities have the right to express their views and that their views on all matters affecting them should be given due weight, in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and that they must be provided with disability- and age-appropriate assistance. Guaranteeing the right of children to participate in their education must be applied equally to children with disabilities, in their own learning and individualized education plans, within the classroom pedagogy, through school councils, in the development of school policies and systems, and in the development of the wider educational policy.¹⁹

48. Article 8 calls for measures to raise awareness and challenge stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities, targeting in particular practices affecting women and girls with disabilities, persons with intellectual disabilities and persons with intensive support requirements. Stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices constitute barriers that impede both access to and effective learning within the education system. The Committee notes the practice of some parents removing their children with disabilities from inclusive schools, on the basis of a lack of awareness and understanding of the nature of disability. States parties must adopt measures to build a culture of diversity, participation and involvement in community life and to highlight inclusive education as a means of achieving a quality education for all students, with and without disabilities, parents, teachers and school administrations, as well as the community and society. States parties must ensure that mechanisms are in place to foster, at all levels of the education system and among parents and the wider public, an attitude of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities. Civil society, in particular organizations representing persons with disabilities, should be involved in all awareness-raising activities.

49. Articles 9 and 24 are closely interconnected. Accessibility is a precondition for the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society. Persons with disabilities cannot effectively enjoy their right to inclusive education without an accessible built environment,

18 Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration.

19 *Ibid.*, general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard.

including schools and all other places of education, and without accessible public transport, services, information and communications technologies. Modes and means of teaching should be accessible and teaching should be conducted in accessible environments. The whole environment in which students with disabilities learn must be designed in such a way as to foster inclusion. Inclusive education is also a powerful tool for the promotion of accessibility and universal design.

50. The Committee calls States parties' attention to its general comment No. 1 (2014) on equal recognition before the law and stresses that inclusive education provides students with disabilities, in particular those with psychosocial or intellectual impairments, with an opportunity to express their will and preferences. States parties must ensure that inclusive education supports learners with disabilities in building their confidence to exercise legal capacity, providing the necessary support at all educational levels, including to diminish future requirements for support if they so wish.

51. Persons with disabilities, in particular women and girls with disabilities, can be disproportionately affected by violence and abuse, including physical and humiliating punishments by educational personnel, for example through the use of restraints and seclusion and bullying by others in and en route to school. To give effect to article 16 (2), States parties are required to take all appropriate measures to provide protection from and prevent all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, including sexual violence, against persons with disabilities. Such measures must be age-, gender- and disability-sensitive. The Committee strongly endorses the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that States parties prohibit all forms of corporal punishment and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment in all settings, including schools, and ensure effective sanctions against perpetrators.²⁰ It encourages schools and other educational centres to involve students, including students with disabilities, in the development of policies, including accessible protection mechanisms, to address disciplinary measures and bullying, including cyberbullying, which is increasingly recognized as a growing feature of the lives of students, in particular children.

52. Inclusive education requires recognition of the right of persons with disabilities to live within the community and enjoy inclusion and participation in the community (art. 19). It also demands recognition of the equal right of persons with disabilities to a family life or, failing that, to alternative care within a community setting (art. 23). Children in the care of the State party, residing for example in foster care or care

20 Ibid., general comment No. 8 (2006) on the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment.

homes, must be ensured the right to inclusive education and the right to appeal against decisions of the State party that deny them the right to inclusive education. Too many persons with disabilities live in long-term institutional care, without access to community-based services, including education, consistent with their right to, *inter alia*, family life, community living, freedom of association, protection from violence and access to justice. The introduction of inclusive education in the local community must take place alongside a strategic commitment to ending the practice of placing persons with disabilities in institutions (see para. 66 below). States parties should note the role that exercising the right to inclusive education will play in building the strengths, skills and competencies necessary for all persons with disabilities to enjoy, benefit from and contribute to their local communities.

53. For inclusive education to be realized effectively, persons with disabilities must be guaranteed personal mobility on an independent basis (art. 20). Where transportation is not readily available and where there are no personal assistants to support access to educational institutions, persons with disabilities, in particular blind and visually impaired persons, must be given adequate training in mobility skills to promote greater independence. States parties should also provide persons with disabilities with the opportunity to acquire mobility aids and appliances at an affordable cost.

54. Fulfilment of the right of persons with disabilities to enjoy the highest possible standard of health without discrimination (art. 25) is integral to the opportunity to benefit fully from education. The ability to attend educational environments and to learn effectively is seriously compromised if there is no access to health or to appropriate treatment and care. States parties should establish health, hygiene and nutrition programmes with a gender perspective that are integrated into education services and allow for the continual monitoring of all health needs. Such programmes should be developed on the principles of universal design and accessibility, provide regular school nurse visits and health screenings, and build community partnerships. Persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, must be provided with age-appropriate, comprehensive and inclusive sexuality education, based on scientific evidence and human rights standards, and in accessible formats.

55. States parties must take effective measures to provide habilitation and rehabilitation services within the education system, including health-care, occupational, physical, social, counselling and other services (art. 26). Such services must begin at the earliest stage possible, be based on a multidisciplinary assessment of a student's strengths and support maximum independence, autonomy, respect of dignity, full physical, mental, social and vocational ability and inclusion and participation in

all aspects of life. The Committee stresses the significance of supporting the development of community-based rehabilitation that addresses early identification and encourages peer support.

56. Quality inclusive education must prepare persons with disabilities for work life through the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary for participation in the open labour market and in an open, inclusive and accessible work environment (art. 27).

57. Full participation in political and public life is enhanced through the realization of the right to inclusive education. Curricula for all students must include the topic of citizenship and the skills of self-advocacy and self-representation as a fundamental basis for participation in political and societal processes. Public affairs include forming and participating in student organizations such as student unions and States parties should promote the creation of an environment in which persons with disabilities can form, join and effectively and fully participate in such student organizations through the forms of communication and language of their choice (art. 29).

58. States parties must remove barriers and promote accessibility and availability of inclusive opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in play, recreation and sports in the school system and in extracurricular activities, including in other educational environments (art. 30).²¹ Appropriate measures must be in place within the educational environment to ensure opportunities for persons with disabilities to access cultural life and to develop and utilize their creative, artistic and intellectual potential, not only for their own benefit but also for the enrichment of society. Such measures must ensure that persons with disabilities are entitled to recognition of their specific cultural and linguistic identity, including sign languages and deaf culture.

V. Implementation at the national level

59. The Committee has identified a number of challenges facing States parties in the implementation of article 24. In order to implement and sustain an inclusive education system for all persons with disabilities, the measures below need to be addressed at the national level.

60. Responsibility for the education at all levels of persons with disabilities, as well as for the education of others, must rest with the education ministry. In many countries, the education of persons with disabilities is currently marginalized within ministries of social welfare or health, which has resulted in, inter alia, exclusion from mainstream

²¹ *Ibid.*, general comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts.

legislation, policies, planning and resourcing for education, lower levels of per capita investment in the education of persons with disabilities, a lack of overarching and coherent structures to support inclusive education, a lack of integrated data collection on enrolment, retention and attainment, and a failure to develop inclusive teacher education. States parties must urgently take measures to put the education of learners with disabilities under the competence of the ministry of education.

61. States parties must ensure a comprehensive and intersectoral commitment to inclusive education throughout the government. Inclusive education cannot be realized by education ministries in isolation. All relevant ministries and commissions with responsibilities that cover substantive articles of the Convention must commit to and align their understanding of the implications of an inclusive education system in order to achieve an integrated approach and to work collaboratively towards a shared agenda. Accountability measures for all ministries involved must be put into place to uphold such commitments. Partnerships should also be forged with service providers, organizations representing persons with disabilities, the media, civil society organizations, local authorities, student associations and federations, universities and teacher education colleges.

62. States parties, at every level, must implement or introduce legislation based on the human rights model of disability that fully complies with article 24. The Committee recalls that article 4 (5) requires federal States to ensure that article 24 is implemented, without limitations or exceptions, in all parts of the State party.

63. A comprehensive and coordinated legislative and policy framework for inclusive education must be introduced, together with a clear and adequate time frame for implementation and sanctions for violations. Such a framework must address issues of flexibility, diversity and equality in all educational institutions for all learners and identify responsibilities at all levels of government. Key elements will include:

- (a) Compliance with international human rights standards;
- (b) A clear definition of inclusion and the specific objectives it seeks to achieve at all educational levels. Inclusion principles and practices must be considered as integral to reform, and not simply as an add-on programme;
- (c) A substantive right to inclusive education as a key element of the legislative framework. Provisions that define certain categories of students as “uneducable”, for example, must be repealed;
- (d) A guarantee for students with and without disabilities to

the same right to access inclusive learning opportunities within the general education system and, for individual learners, to the necessary support services at all levels;

(e) A requirement for all new schools to be designed and built following the principle of universal design through accessibility standards, together with a time frame for adapting existing schools in line with the Committee's general comment No. 2. The use of public procurement to implement this element is encouraged;

(f) The introduction of comprehensive quality standards for inclusive education and disability-inclusive monitoring mechanisms to track progress in implementation at all levels and ensure that policies and programmes are implemented and backed by the requisite investment;

(g) The introduction of accessible monitoring mechanisms to ensure the implementation of policies and the provision of the requisite investment;

(h) Recognition of the need for reasonable accommodations to support inclusion, based on human rights standards rather than on the efficient use of resources, together with sanctions for failure to provide reasonable accommodation;

(i) The clear statement, in all legislation with the potential to have an impact on inclusive education, that inclusion is a concrete goal;

(j) A consistent framework for the early identification, assessment and support required to enable persons with disabilities to flourish in inclusive learning environments;

(k) The obligation for local authorities to plan and provide for all learners, including persons with disabilities, within inclusive settings and classes, including in the most appropriate languages, accessible formats and modes and means of communication;

(l) Legislation to guarantee to all persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, the right to be heard and to have their opinion be given due consideration within the education system, including through school councils, governing bodies, local and national governments, and mechanisms through which to challenge and appeal decisions concerning education;

(m) The creation of partnerships and coordination between all stakeholders, including persons with disabilities through their representative organizations, different agencies, development

organizations, non-governmental organizations and parents or caregivers.

64. Legislation must be supported by an education sector plan, developed in consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, and detailing the process for the implementation of an inclusive education system. It should contain a time frame and measurable goals, including measures to ensure consistency. The plan should be informed by a comprehensive analysis of the current context pertaining to inclusive education in order to provide a baseline from which to progress, including data on, for example, current budgetary allocations, quality of data collection methods, numbers of children with disabilities out of school, challenges and barriers, existing laws and policies, key concerns of persons with disabilities, families and the State party.

65. States parties must introduce independent, effective, accessible, transparent, safe and enforceable complaints mechanisms and legal remedies in cases of violations of the right to education. Persons with disabilities must have access to justice systems that understand how to accommodate persons with disabilities and are capable of addressing disability-based claims. States parties must also ensure that information about the right to education and about how to challenge a denial or violation of that right must be widely disseminated and publicized to persons with disabilities, with the involvement of their representative organizations.

66. Inclusive education is incompatible with institutionalization. States parties must engage in a well-planned and structured process of de-institutionalization of persons with disabilities. Such a process must address: a managed transition setting out a defined time frame for the transition; the introduction of a legislative requirement to develop community based provision; the re-direction of funds and the introduction of multidisciplinary frameworks to support and strengthen community-based services; the provision of support for families; and collaboration and consultation with organizations representing persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, as well as parents or caregivers. Pending the process of de-institutionalization, persons in institutional care settings should be given access to inclusive education with immediate effect by linking them with inclusive academic institutions in the community.

67. Early childhood interventions can be particularly valuable for children with disabilities, serving to strengthen their capacity to benefit from education and promoting their enrolment and attendance. All such interventions must guarantee respect for the dignity and autonomy of the child. In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Sustainable Development Goal 4, States parties are urged

to ensure access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education, together with the provision of support and training to parents and caregivers of young children with disabilities. If identified and supported early, young children with disabilities are more likely to transition smoothly into pre-primary and primary inclusive education settings. States parties must ensure coordination between all relevant ministries, authorities and bodies as well as organizations of persons with disabilities and other non-governmental partners.

68. In accordance with article 31, States parties must collect appropriate disaggregated data to formulate policies, plans and programmes to fulfil their obligations under article 24. They must introduce measures to address the lack of accurate data on prevalence of persons with different impairments, as well as the lack of sufficient quality research and data relating to access to, permanence in and progress within education, provision of reasonable accommodation and the associated outcomes. Census, survey and administrative data, including data from the Education Management Information System, must capture information on students with disabilities, including those still living in institutional settings. States parties should also gather disaggregated data and evidence on the barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from having access to, remaining in and making progress in inclusive quality education to enable the adoption of effective measures to dismantle such barriers. Strategies must be adopted to overcome the exclusion of persons with disabilities from standard quantitative and qualitative data-gathering mechanisms, including when it results from parents' reluctance to admit the existence of a child with a disability, the lack of birth registration and invisibility within institutions.

69. States parties must commit sufficient financial and human resources throughout the development of an education sector plan and of cross-sectoral plans to support the implementation of inclusive education, consistent with the principle of progressive realization. States parties must reform their governance systems and financing mechanisms to ensure the right to education of all persons with disabilities. They should also allocate budgets using mechanisms available under public procurement processes and partnerships with the private sector. These allocations must prioritize, *inter alia*, ensuring adequate resources for rendering existing educational settings accessible in a time-bound manner, investing in inclusive teacher education, making available reasonable accommodations, providing accessible transport to school, making available appropriate and accessible text books, teaching and learning materials, providing assistive technologies and sign language, and implementing awareness-raising initiatives to address stigma and discrimination, in particular bullying in educational settings.

70. The Committee urges States parties to transfer resources from segregated to inclusive environments. States parties should develop a funding model that allocates resources and incentives for inclusive educational environments to provide the necessary support to persons with disabilities. The determination of the most appropriate approach to funding will be informed to a significant degree by the existing educational environment and the requirements of potential learners with disabilities who are affected by it.

71. A process of educating all teachers at preschool, primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational education levels must be initiated to provide them with the core competencies and values necessary to work in inclusive educational environments. Such a process requires adaptations to both pre- and in-service training to achieve the appropriate skill levels in the shortest time possible, to facilitate the transition to an inclusive education system. All teachers must be provided with dedicated units/modules to prepare them to work in inclusive settings, as well as practical experiential learning settings where they can build the skills and confidence to solve problems through diverse inclusion challenges. The core content of teacher education must address a basic understanding of human diversity, growth and development, the human rights model of disability and inclusive pedagogy that enables teachers to identify students' functional abilities (strengths, abilities and learning styles) to ensure their participation in inclusive educational environments. Teacher education should include learning about the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication such as Braille, large print, accessible multimedia, easyread, plain language, sign language and deaf culture, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities. In addition, teachers need practical guidance and support in, among others: the provision of individualized instruction; teaching the same content using varied teaching methods to respond to the learning styles and unique abilities of each person; the development and use of individual educational plans to support specific learning requirements; and the introduction of a pedagogy centred on students' educational objectives.

72. Inclusive education requires a support and resource system for teachers in educational institutions at all levels. Such a system might include partnerships between neighbouring educational institutions, including universities, promoting collaborative practices, including team teaching, study groups, joint student assessment processes, peer support and exchange visits, as well as partnerships with civil society. Parents and caregivers of students with disabilities can, where appropriate, serve as partners in the development and implementation of learning programmes, including individualized education plans. They can play a significant role in advising and supporting teachers in the provision of support to

individual students, but must never be a pre-requisite for admission into the education system. States parties should utilize all possible sources of support for teachers, including organizations representing persons with disabilities, learners with disabilities and local community members who can contribute significantly in the form of peer mentoring, partnering and problem-solving. Their involvement provides an additional resource in the classroom and serves to build links with local communities, breaking down barriers and rendering teachers more responsive and sensitive to strengths and requirements of students with disabilities.

73. Authorities at all levels must have the capacity, commitment and resources to implement laws, policies and programmes to support inclusive education. States parties must ensure the development and delivery of training to inform all relevant authorities of their responsibilities under the law and to increase understanding of the rights of persons with disabilities. The skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to implement inclusive education policies and practices include: understanding of the concept of the right to an inclusive education and its aims, knowledge of the relevant international and national legislation and policies, development of local inclusive education plans, collaboration and partnerships, support, guidance and supervision of local educational institutions, monitoring and evaluation.

74. Quality inclusive education requires methods of appraising and monitoring students' progress that considers the barriers faced by students with disabilities. Traditional systems of assessment, which use standardized achievement test scores as the sole indicator of success for both students and schools, may disadvantage students with disabilities. The emphasis should be on individual progress towards broad goals. With appropriate teaching methodologies, support and accommodations, all curricula can be adapted to meet the needs of all students, including those with disabilities. Inclusive student assessment systems can be strengthened through a system of individualized supports.

75. In compliance with article 33, and to measure progress on the realization of the right to education through the establishment of an inclusive education system, States parties must develop monitoring frameworks with structural, process and outcome indicators, and specific benchmarks and targets for each indicator, consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 4.²² Persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, should be involved in both the determination of the indicators and in the collection of data and statistics. Structural indicators should measure barriers to inclusive education and not be limited merely to collecting

22 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Human Rights Indicators: a Guide to Measurement and Implementation* (New York and Geneva, 2012).

data disaggregated by impairment. Process indicators, such as on changes to the accessibility of physical environments, curriculum adaptations or teacher training, will make it possible to monitor the progress of the transformation. Outcome indicators such as the percentage of students with disabilities in inclusive learning environments obtaining final official certification or diplomas or the percentage of students with disabilities admitted to secondary education, must also be established. States parties should also consider measuring the quality of education through, for example, the five dimensions recommended by UNESCO: respect for rights, equity, relevance, pertinence, efficiency and efficacy. Monitoring affirmative action measures such as quotas or incentives may also be considered.

76. The Committee notes the growth in many countries of private-sector education. States parties must recognize that the right to inclusive education extends to the provision of all education, not merely that provided by public authorities. States parties must adopt measures that protect against infringements of rights by third parties, including the business sector. Regarding the right to education, such measures must address the obligation to guarantee the provision of inclusive education and involve, as necessary, legislation and regulation, monitoring, oversight, enforcement and the adoption of policies to frame how business enterprises can have an impact on the effective enjoyment and exercise of rights by persons with disabilities. Educational institutions, including private educational institutions and enterprises, should not charge additional fees for integrating accessibility and/or reasonable accommodation.

2. Academic analyses

a) UNCRPD Article 24 and the UNCRPD Committee's General Comment No 4 on the right to inclusive education – an EUD perspective

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1 Introduction

Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), dedicated to the topic of education, has been analysed and critiqued many times since the adoption of the UNCRPD in 2006 (e.g. WFD Position Paper on the Language Rights of Deaf Children, 2016; Murray et al., 2018; Ball, 2012; Batterbury, 2012). However, more recently in 2016, the UNCRPD committee has published General Comment No 4 on the right to inclusive education. The General Comment is much more detailed and specific than Article 24, describing how Article 24 should be implemented to ensure inclusive education for learners with disabilities. However, parts of the General Comment are problematic from a European deaf perspective, which differs in many respects from the perspective of other disability groups with regards to the topic of education. The General Comment does mention multiple elements that are crucial to ensuring that persons with disabilities, including deaf persons, can be fully included in education on an equal basis with others. Nevertheless, in ambitiously addressing the topic of inclusive education for the entire disability community, from the perspective of EUD, it fails to sufficiently describe the means required to guarantee that deaf learners specifically can enjoy their right to a truly inclusive education. Indeed, it does not adequately address a variety of elements that are indispensable for ensuring that deaf children have a meaningful, equitable, and participatory learning experience with their hearing peers in inclusive schools.

Therefore, this chapter will present a short outline of the most important paragraphs of Article 24 from a European deaf perspective, but will then focus on the General Comment. Our goal is to add detail to the discussion on how to provide truly inclusive education for deaf learners. To this end, this chapter focuses on providing additional information from a deaf perspective on several aspects addressed by the General Comment. It specifically also analyses topics regarding which the deaf perspective diverges from the perspective of the general disability community addressed in the General Comment.

2 Introduction to Article 24 of the UNCRPD

Article 24 is of major importance for disability communities, as full access to quality education is fundamental and provides the basis for an individual's personal, social, and academic development. Two paragraphs contained in Article 24 are of particular importance for deaf persons, especially those who use sign language. Paragraphs 3 (b) and (c) highlight that "States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including: [...]"

b) Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;

c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development."

Throughout this chapter, we will argue that quality bilingual education in both sign language and written/spoken language, which can be provided in a variety of different educational models, such as inclusive schools, deaf schools, or mixed models, is a necessary condition for implementing paragraph 3 (c) for deaf learners.

3 The General Comment No 4 on the right to inclusive education

As the UN Dag Hammarskjöld library explains, general comments are "a treaty body's interpretation of human rights treaty provisions, thematic issues or its methods of work. General comments often seek to clarify the reporting duties of States Parties with respect to certain provisions and suggest approaches to implementing treaty provisions" (2017). This General Comment provides an in-depth analysis of Article 24, detailing how its objectives should be reached.

Along with various other disability organisations, the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), the European Union of the Deaf (EUD), the World Federation of the Deaf Youth Section (WFDYS), and the European Union of the Deaf Youth (EUDY) made a joint submission in 2016 to the draft General Comment to provide a crucial deaf perspective. As highlighted above, we nevertheless still see issues with the General Comment. Therefore, this chapter aims to address key aspects of this document from a deaf perspective based on EUD's position paper on the General Comment (2017) drafted by the author, which was adopted during EUD's General Assembly 2017 in Malta.

3.1 A definition of inclusive education in line with the human rights model of disability

While Article 24 does not provide a definition of inclusive education, the General Comment explicitly describes inclusive education as involving a “process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all learners of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and the environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences” (par. 11).

This definition is to be commended, as it is aligned with the human rights model of disability. This model “places the individual centre stage in all decisions affecting him/her and, most importantly, locates the main ‘problem’ outside the person and in society” (Quinn & Degener, 2002). Existing barriers are thus appropriately problematised by the General Comment as being created by society (par. 4). It rightfully contrasts inclusion with the model that is to be replaced: “integration,” a “process of placing persons with disabilities in existing mainstream educational institutions with the understanding that they can adjust to the standardized requirements of such institutions” (par. 11).

From a deaf perspective, ensuring inclusive education must involve the creation of a fully accessible environment that accommodates the needs of deaf learners, sign language and spoken language users alike. The following sub-section as well as other chapters in this volume will address a variety of elements that are required when creating such environments for deaf learners.

3.2 Elements required for the creation of fully accessible learning environments

From the perspective of EUD, UNCRPD Article 24, 3 (b) and (c), quoted above, combine the two most crucial aspects with regards to providing fully accessible education for deaf learners, especially those who use sign language. These are the creation of learning environments that are comprehensively accessible through sign language and that therefore provide the potential for equal personal, academic and social development. This is reiterated in the General Comment, which adds that this must be guaranteed both in and outside formal school settings (par. 35 (c)). In this section, we will analyse elements put forward by the General Comment in this regard, and provide further detail on topics where from EUD’s perspective, the General Comment falls short with regards to fully addressing the situation and needs of deaf learners.

3.2.1 Respect for sign language and deaf culture/deaf identity

The General Comment highlights that the cultures and languages of persons with disabilities—here deaf persons—must be respected (par. 25) within the education system. As stated, this must involve the right of deaf persons to learn and express themselves in sign language, along with measures necessary to recognising and promoting the linguistic identity of the deaf community (par. 35 (b)). The General Comment also refers to the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, which stipulates the right of children to be taught in their own language (Article 5 (c)). From the perspective of EUD, ensuring this right in practice will require changes to learning environments, curricula as well as teaching methods and languages. This includes teaching in and the teaching of sign language, as well as the inclusion of deaf culture and deaf history in curricula. In bilingual educational settings where deaf and hearing learners are educated together, these classes must be taught to both groups in a way that encourages sign language proficiency. This must allow deaf students to learn sign language and reach a native level while enabling hearing students to acquire a level of sign language that allows them to communicate with deaf classmates in and outside of the classroom. An educational setting can only be considered truly inclusive if deaf learners can fully develop academically and personally in their preferred languages alongside hearing peers. Such fully inclusive environments will further many of the other goals of the UNCRPD. Indeed, more of the general hearing population acquiring sign languages while learning about deaf culture and deaf rights would have a long-term positive impact on the inclusion of deaf persons in all areas of life.

The General Comments rightfully highlights that there is a widespread lack of teaching materials in accessible formats, including sign language (par. 23). As visual information is the most accessible to deaf learners independently of whether they are sign language or spoken language users, visual teaching methods should also generally be preferred to oral ones when teaching deaf learners. This can include the use of images, signed or subtitled videos, and speech-to-text services to offer varied approaches for achieving a specific learning goal. Also, as the General Comment accurately notes, quality speech therapy and captioning must be provided when required, and assistive technology such as induction loop technology must be available for hearing aid or cochlear implant (CI) users (par. 35 (b)). In accordance with Article 24 paragraph 2 (c), we also believe that it is crucial to design the learning environment according to the learners' needs (WFD, EUD, WFDYS, EUDY, 2016).

The General Comment correctly points out the need to employ staff who master sign language, as this is one of the skills required to work effectively

in an inclusive education environment (par. 36) where deaf students learn on par with others. Additional core competencies and values that are also appropriately highlighted by the General Comment (par. 12 (d)) include familiarity with deaf culture as well as more generally the human rights model of disability (par. 71). As the General Comment highlights, “teachers must be provided with dedicated units/modules to prepare them” (par. 71) for teaching deaf learners. Hearing teachers, even those who work in collaboration with a signing co-teacher, must master sign language to ensure that deaf learners are fully included and are not being limited in their potential to communicate or participate compared to their hearing peers. Furthermore, knowing sign language will allow a hearing teacher to adapt their teaching style, methods, speed, etc., to ensure that the needs of both hearing and deaf learners are met. The General Comment mentions the need to achieve appropriate skill levels (par. 71), but fails to define these levels in more detail. From EUD’s perspective, a more widespread use of the existing Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels for sign language would help with defining and comparing sign language skills of teachers and pupils. In particular, teachers instructing deaf learners in sign language should at least be able to use sign language at a near-native level.

The General Comment states that “[l]ack of knowledge about the nature and advantages of inclusive and quality education and diversity “[...]; lack of outreach to all parents; and lack of appropriate responses to support requirements [have led] to misplaced fears and stereotypes that inclusion will cause a deterioration in the quality of education or otherwise have a negative impact on others” (par. 4 (c)). EUD strongly agrees that many of these concerns stem from a lack of appropriate State Party response to support requirements, but does not consider the fears that result to be at all misplaced. We believe that many concerns of deaf persons about inclusive models are fundamentally valid. Indeed, these fears are evidence-based (e.g. Marschark et al., 2012; Berry, 2017) and often founded in past experiences with a mainstream education system that was not genuinely inclusive as defined by the General Comment, but where various forms of integration were inappropriately required from the deaf learner. Experiences like these have led to many parents—especially those who are deaf themselves—choosing a deaf school that teaches in sign language, rather than enrolling their child in a mainstream school that is not fully inclusive. Furthermore, even the current interpretation of how to provide inclusive education for deaf learners in many EU countries predominantly involves the provision of sign language interpretation as the primary or sole accessibility measure. However, as we will elaborate below, this is not sufficient for the full inclusion of a deaf learner, either academically or socially. We strongly believe that these fears can only be alleviated through action, which ensures the rights of deaf learners to access an environment which maximises their academic and social development, as stipulated

in Article 24. This will necessarily include the guarantee that they will have the option to be taught together with other deaf peers bilingually in sign and spoken/written language. Only the broader understanding of full inclusion presented here can ensure that they are as academically successful and socially included as their hearing peers and as many deaf learners have been in quality deaf schools teaching in sign language. Ideally, such educational environments should be widespread and locally available to be accessible to all.

3.2.2 Importance of deaf teaching professionals

The General Comment emphasises that it is crucial for States Parties to invest in and support the recruitment and continuous education of teachers with disabilities (par. 37). We strongly agree with the assertion of the General Comment that the presence of deaf teachers will promote equal rights, bring unique expertise and skills into learning environments, contribute to breaking down barriers, and that they will serve as important role models for deaf students (par. 37).

This applies especially in a deaf context, as deaf teachers acting as linguistic, cultural, and identity role models are particularly valuable. Indeed, deaf teachers are best equipped to teach sign language at native level, a level of learning to which deaf learners have the right (WFD, EUD, WFDYS, EUDY, 2016). As an estimated 95% of deaf children are born to hearing parents (Swanwick, 2017), this is especially crucial as deaf professionals can express on a social level what it means to be deaf. Furthermore, they will be able to demonstrate how to interact effectively with hearing people as a bilingual person (Singleton & Morgan, 2006). Finally, they can serve as living examples of fully included successful deaf professionals.

However, to achieve this, significant barriers to teacher education for deaf students must be addressed. These barriers currently prevent many from studying to become teachers. Concretely, the General Comment states in this regard that attitudinal, physical, linguistic, communication, financial, legal and other barriers to higher levels of education, including tertiary education, must be identified and removed (par. 38). A dedicated chapter in this book by Danielsson & Leeson (Chapter 2 f)) will provide a more in-depth insight into the barriers that deaf students face when trying to access tertiary education in general and teacher education specifically.

3.2.3 Importance of deaf peers

Having deaf peers is crucial for deaf learners as, like all children, establishing positive social relationships with peers is of the utmost importance for their development (Kemple & Ellis, 2005). However, deaf and hard of hearing children are increasingly being educated in mainstream schools and are

often being mainstreamed individually as the only deaf or hard of hearing learner in the classroom. In these linguistically isolated contexts, they will encounter increased difficulties in forming and sustaining relationships with their hearing peers in an overwhelmingly hearing school environment (Yuhan, 2013). Indeed, various research studies have demonstrated that deaf and hard of hearing learners who are enrolled in mainstream education on their own more often experience difficulties with regards to making friends with hearing peers and feeling socially accepted (Stinson & Antia, 1999). Furthermore, as WFD (2016) highlights, “schools in which the majority of learners are hearing may present barriers to deaf learners, [if] they lack the supportive and inclusive signing environments that deaf learners require to thrive and to acquire a strong sense of linguistic and cultural identity.”

From EUD’s perspective, the General Comment does not adequately address this critical issue with regards to deaf learners. On the contrary, it states that “for many [persons with disabilities], education is available only in settings where persons with disabilities are isolated from their peers” (par. 3). From a deaf perspective, this definition of “peers” is not necessarily accurate. Indeed, deaf learners who are part of a linguistic community of sign language users often consider other deaf sign language using learners to be their peers, rather than hearing learners who do not use the same language (WFD, EUD, WFDYS, EUDY, 2016). According to this understanding of “peers”, deaf learners would not be isolated in a deaf school, while they are likely to be if they are taught in a mainstream school without signing peers. This would be the case no matter how much individualised educational support, such as sign language interpretation, is provided (WFD, EUD, WFDYS, EUDY, 2016).

EUD thus wants to highlight that if deaf sign language users are to be included in a mainstream school, it is crucial to ensure that they are taught bilingually by a teacher using sign language at a near native level, together with other sign language using and ideally deaf peers. However, as mentioned above, European deaf learners are increasingly being enrolled on their own, with accessibility being provided mainly through a sign language interpreter. EUD believes that there are instances where sign language interpreter use in inclusive education is appropriate. For example, it is crucial for young deaf students to learn how to work with an interpreter in dedicated lessons. Also, an interpreter can be used to interpret group discussions between deaf and hearing learners that are taught together bilingually by a team of speaking and signing teachers. Furthermore, through an interpreter, school events, such as assemblies, in a mainstream school can be made accessible for deaf learners. We agree with the General Comment that in these instances professional sign language interpreters must be provided (par. 30). If sign language interpreters are being used, it is of critical importance that they are qualified to work in

educational settings. However, the provision of a sign language interpreter to a deaf learner who is mainstreamed on their own as the sole accessibility measure cannot be considered to sufficiently ensure a deaf learners' social and academic inclusion. Indeed, WFD has powerfully argued in comments submitted during the drafting period of the Convention that "inclusion as a simple placement in a regular school without meaningful interaction with classmates and professionals at all times is tantamount to exclusion" (WFD, 2006). More information about the limitations of sign language interpretation in education can be found in Chapter 2 d) by de Wit in this volume.

Even for deaf children who have a cochlear implant or wear hearing aids and primarily use spoken language, it is important to have deaf peers allowing them to create meaningful social relationships with peers who face similar barriers. It needs to be highlighted that these technologies produce variable results for different deaf persons (Humphries et al., 2012) and will most likely not enable them to acquire a hearing status comparable to a hearing person. Therefore, even a deaf implanted person whose implantation is considered a success will remain at risk of being at least partially excluded in an exclusively spoken-language school environment without other deaf peers, as highlighted above.

3.2.4 The importance of choice between different educational models

Deaf-led organisations (e.g. WFD, EUD, WFDYS, EUDY, 2016) have repeatedly advocated for allowing deaf learners to choose between different educational models—inclusive schools, deaf schools, and mixed models—teaching bilingually in sign and spoken/written language. We believe that it is crucial to allow parents and their deaf children to choose the educational model that best ensures the child's academic and social development, as stipulated by the CRPD (Article 24, 3 (c)).

However, the General Comment states that "[...] for many [persons with disabilities] education is available only in settings [...] where [...] the education they receive is of an inferior quality." (par. 3). As Murray et al. (2018) point out, this is not necessarily the case for deaf learners in deaf schools. Indeed, "[d]eaf schools [have been] the key places for deaf children to learn sign language and to develop and share their linguistic and cultural identity" (WFD, 2016) and they are thus still considered by many members of the deaf community as a valid schooling option for deaf sign language using learners. The International Disability Alliance (IDA) has even argued that "for deaf, blind, deaf blind and in some cases for hard of hearing students as well, the option for separate learning environments must be understood as necessary to maximize academic and social development'" (IDA, 2008). As WFD (2016) highlights, research

demonstrates that “deaf children [who are] given quality education bilingually [i.e. in sign language and the written/spoken language] or even multi-lingually are most likely to succeed academically.” Therefore, EUD believes that quality deaf schools should constitute one of various valid options for teaching deaf learners, if they fulfil the following criteria. They must teach learners bilingually in sign language and written /spoken language at native level, employ deaf role models, follow a curriculum at least equal in quality to the one used in mainstream schools, award diplomas equal to those awarded at mainstream schools, and give access to further education.

Previously in this chapter, we have questioned the suggestion contained in the General Comment that education in special settings is generally of an inferior quality, here with regards to deaf schools. We wonder if it is due to this assumption that the General Comment concludes that two education systems, defined as “a mainstream [...] and a special/segreated²³ education system”, shall not be maintained in parallel (par. 40). Both this suggestion and conclusion are problematic from EUD’s perspective, as they threaten quality deaf schools as one of several suitable educational models. It needs to be highlighted that even within a disability group, such as deaf persons, there are diverse opinions regarding the personal choices that an individual might want to make with regards to their own education. Particularly as the UNCRPD stipulates that States Parties shall recognise the diversity of persons with disabilities (UNCRPD preamble, (i)), we feel that the UNCRPD Committee should recognise this existing diversity, here regarding opinions about suitable educational models for deaf learners.

Additionally, it is important to point out that many deaf persons, particularly those who use sign language as a primary language, perceive themselves as a linguistic minority (Jones, 1993), rather than as a disability group. Therefore, as Murray et al. (2018) argue, bilingual education provided to a group of sign language users “should not be defined as ‘special education’ or ‘segreated education’ as the disability movement understands it, but as a form of education within an inclusive education system.” It could be compared to a school teaching in a language that is not the national majority language of the country it is located in, with the goal to provide education to a linguistic minority in their language of choice. Additionally, unlike hearing minority language users, many deaf sign language users cannot fully access the majority spoken language, which only strengthens the argument for providing deaf learners with sign language environments and bilingual education.

23 The General Comment defines segregation as a situation “when the education of learners with disabilities is provided in separate environments designed or used to respond to a particular impairment or to various impairments, in isolation from learners without disabilities” (par. 11).

Therefore, we strongly believe that States Parties “transfer[ing] resources from segregated to inclusive environments” in a deaf context, as requested by the General Comment (par. 70) would significantly limit deaf learners’ options to access the environment that is most appropriate for them. Indeed, Murray et al. (2018) argue that “governments closing deaf schools, and not providing sign language environments in inclusive education at the same time, are violating the intent of the Article 24.” This is supported by WFD, who highlighted the importance of sign language environments for deaf learners during the negotiations for the UNCRPD (Murray et al., 2018, Kauppinen & Jokinen, 2014). Concretely, WFD suggested including the following paragraph on the topic of linguistic rights into the Convention: “State parties shall ensure all... [persons] with disabilities have full access to inclusive education in their own community in the language of their own choice in terms of delivery of education information.” (Murray et al., 2018) This paragraph was not included in the final version of the text, but it has been argued that “the terms ‘in environments which maximize academic and social development’ are generally understood as an authorisation to educate blind, deaf and blind-deaf children in special schools” (de Beco, 2014). Indeed, from a deaf perspective, this interpretation would render some aspects of the General Comment (e.g. paragraph 40 and 70) contradictory to the objectives of Article 24, paragraph 3 (c). In line with this, de Beco (2014) states that “persons with sensory or communication impairments should be allowed to be educated in special schools, although this option should not prevent them from asking to be able to participate in the general education system.” From EUD’s perspective, it comes back to the importance of personal choice with regards to being able to access the best education for the individual in question. We therefore regret that the General Comment opposes, in its paragraph 40, the idea of deaf schools as an educational option and therefore restricts the freedom of choice in education for deaf learners.

Yet another paragraph of the General Comment would, if it were implemented by States Parties, present a risk from EUD’s perspective to deaf sign language learners’ right to access the environment that best fits them. Paragraph 27 states “that persons with disabilities shall be able to attend primary and secondary schools within the communities where they live and that learners should not be sent away from home.” However, the same issue arises with regards to the term “communities” that has previously been analysed in this chapter with regards to the definition of the term “peers.” Indeed, deaf learners may feel a stronger sense of belonging towards the often geographically dispersed deaf community, adhering to a definition of community that is linguistic, rather than geographic. It is true that there are obvious benefits to enrolling one’s child in a school close to home. However, there are parents and deaf learners who might want to elect for a school that has already enrolled other deaf peers, even if this school is further away from their place of residence. Ideally, a variety of

such models that are described in this chapter should be widespread and locally available. However, in instances where the concentration of deaf learners is not sufficiently high for this to be the case, stipulating the location and type of school risks restricting parents' and learners' ability to access the most appropriate model. Indeed, as highlighted above, deaf and sign language using peers are an essential part of the environment required by Article 24 (par. 3 (c)) to maximise deaf learners' social development. This is increasingly relevant, as we see a decreasing number of deaf sign language users (Schermer, 2012). This is linked, as Johnston (2004) points out, to declining rates of deafness at birth and technological advances. Johnston (2004) further notes that there is an increase of cochlear implantation as well as, within the general move towards inclusive education, an increase in educational placements that do not provide education in sign language. Furthermore, medical professionals, who are usually the first source of information for parents of deaf children who are themselves predominantly hearing, often do not provide full information about the importance of early sign language acquisition. Instead, they often direct parents towards a more medical/ technological approach of trying to fix the hearing and to focus on spoken language acquisition rather than adopting the bilingual approach that is supported by evidence-based research (e.g. Swanswick, 2016; Humphries et al., 2014). With declining rates of young deaf sign language users, there is a risk of decreasing concentrations of deaf sign language using children living in the same neighbourhood. As highlighted above, this entails the risk of further endangering deaf learners' access to a sign language environment and their linguistic community in school.

3.2.5 Examples of suitable educational settings for deaf learners

EUD believes that various educational settings that ensure the above-mentioned elements required for deaf learners to have a meaningful, equitable, and participatory learning experience should be widespread and ideally available locally. This includes a spectrum of diverse types of settings, ranging from inclusive education to bilingual deaf schools, as well as types that could be described as mixed models.

There are examples across Europe of fully inclusive mainstream schools that provide bilingual education in the same classroom to a mixed group of hearing and deaf children. Here, two teachers instruct simultaneously in both sign and spoken language with at least one of them using sign language at a near native level. This practice is also called co-enrolment. Several of these examples will be described in Chapter 3.

Indeed, there are various methods for creating such a fully inclusive co-enrolment practice. One way can be for a quality deaf school to collaborate closely with a mainstream school and enable deaf learners from the deaf

school to be enrolled in a mainstream school class. Here, both the special education staff from the deaf school and the general education staff from the mainstream school work together to ensure the joint education of all learners. Such an example is described in chapter 3 d) (i) of this volume.

Furthermore, it is possible for deaf schools to utilise their expertise in teaching deaf learners in an innovative way by transforming its functioning to create a fully inclusive co-enrolment experience for deaf and hearing learners. Such an example is showcased in chapter 3 e) (i) of this volume.

Moreover, we have seen that associations that are formed by invested stakeholders can be important for providing the impetus to create accessible education options for deaf children. We will find such an example in chapter 3 b) (ii) of this volume, describing how such an association, formed by deaf parents, led to the creation of a fully inclusive co-enrolment environment. Another example of an association, established by a variety of stakeholders, including professionals as well as deaf parents, deaf adults and researchers, which created a bilingual co-enrolment example by cooperating with two mainstream schools will be presented in chapter 3 c) (i).

As highlighted above, EUD advocates for quality deaf schools to be considered one of these valid educational options, so long as the criteria described in 3.2.4 are fulfilled. Six practice examples of deaf schools providing bilingual education successfully for several years through teachers with very high proficiency in sign language, including deaf teachers, are described in chapter 3 a) (i) of this book.

Deaf units in a mainstream school, which can be considered as mixed models, also exist across Europe. While it is unclear whether the definition of segregation used within the General Comment goes so far as to exclude such models, we feel that they can be a valid option for providing quality education to deaf learners. Concretely, as described by Leeson (2014), these are usually small units that are attached to a mainstream school where children who are deaf or hard of hearing are educated. As Leeson (2014) elaborates further, the use of these units can flexibly adjust to an individual learner's hearing loss, 'oral ability', and other factors, leading them to spend individualised amounts of time in the accessible mainstream class. Such a unit can thus provide a group of deaf learners with the additional support they may need, teaching certain subjects more in depth bilingually. It can therefore simultaneously preserve sign language environments and create inclusion for deaf learners.

Another model, variously described as "reverse mainstreaming" or "reverse inclusion," has been observed throughout Europe, which involves quality deaf schools that teach bilingually in sign and spoken/written language

opening their doors to hearing learners. As Antia & Metz (2014) describe it, this involves a group of hearing learners, often accompanied by a general education teacher, who join a classroom of learners who are deaf or hard of hearing. In this model, the hearing learners are not seen as members of the classroom, but rather as visitors (Antia & Metz, 2014). Reverse inclusion allows deaf learners to continue being educated bilingually with their deaf peers and to establish contacts with hearing children, who would join the classroom to learn in what usually is a smaller class size, benefitting from more individualised education. Furthermore, it would allow both deaf and hearing children to learn about each other and understand diversity.

3.3 Lack of disaggregated data on deafness and research regarding deaf children in inclusive education

The General Comment underlines rightfully that there is a lack of research and disaggregated data on several issues related to inclusive education. Conspicuous gaps in available data include disaggregated statistics on the prevalence of persons with different disabilities, their access to and progress in education, the barriers that prevent them from achieving their educational objectives, the provision of reasonable accommodation, and the educational outcomes of learners with disabilities in inclusive education (par. 68).

For instance, the lack of exact data on the number of deaf persons, including deaf sign language users, in Europe creates barriers to understanding the needs of deaf persons, including in education. Indeed, it is difficult to address existing barriers without exact numbers of deaf learners, including those who use sign language. The General Comment states that “structural indicators should measure barriers to inclusive education and not be limited merely to collecting data disaggregated by impairment” (par. 75). However, at European level, data is still not always disaggregated by disability groups, which would be one among many crucial steps toward understanding and thus responsibly addressing barriers to accessible quality education for deaf learners.

Furthermore, more in-depth research on education for deaf learners, as well as wider dissemination and application of existing research, is crucial. This is needed to improve the implementation of the features of education environments that are indispensable to ensure that deaf learners have a fully accessible, participatory and successful learning experience.

4 Conclusion

EUD understands the importance of ensuring access to fully inclusive education for learners with disabilities, including deaf learners. Indeed, inclusive models will allow deaf and hearing students to interact with and learn from each other. They will also lead to a better awareness of deaf rights, accessibility needs, and reasonable accommodation in the general population. However, while creating inclusive environments it must be ensured that deaf learners, whose educational needs might differ from learners with other or without disabilities, are not excluded from quality education, language acquisition and full social inclusion. We feel that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ system in education, and that provisions need to be made to ensure that members of all disability groups can be provided with educational experiences which best fit each individual learner.

Therefore, we strongly believe that each of the various diverse educational models described here should be promoted rather than discouraged when they provide appropriate and fully accessible learning environments, as described above. As highlighted, this involves teaching a group of deaf peers bilingually in sign and written/spoken language, providing deaf sign language using role-models, and teaching deaf culture and history. Each model is an essential part of an education system that allows learners to choose the environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences, as stipulated by the General Comment. At the same time, a holistic approach to providing inclusive education is required, involving the comprehensive modification of the learning environment in ways described above to ensure that they are genuinely inclusive for all deaf learners. Only if this is ensured will deaf learners be provided with equal opportunities to participate and thrive academically, linguistically, and socially in inclusive schools.

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Biography

Katja Reuter currently works as Policy Officer for the European Union of the Deaf. She is a Master graduate in European Studies. In her master thesis, she focused on EU level cooperation in education and training by analysing the potential of the Open Method of Coordination in Education and Training for European integration. Previous professional experience includes internships at the “European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education” and the Brussels office of the German Bank for Social Economy. In 2013, she was a Blue Book Trainee in the Unit working on the Rights of People with Disabilities of the European Commission (formerly in its Directorate-General Justice). She also worked as a Senior Communication Officer at the Europe Direct Contact Centre, the official information service of the European Union, providing tailored information to citizens’, policy-makers’, civil society organisations’ questions on the EU.

At EUD, she is responsible for monitoring EU policy-making procedures of interest for the European deaf community and for writing EUD amendments to draft EU legislation to ensure the respect of deaf rights in EU law. Linked to this, she is tasked with creating and implementing EUD advocacy strategies to that effect. She also follows up on the implementation of the UNCRPD at European and national levels. Furthermore, she is responsible for writing EUD policy documents and analyses. She is the editor of this publication.

2. Academic analyses

b) Legal Foundations Supporting the Use of Sign Languages in Schools in Europe

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In 2015 – 2016, we conducted a survey in 39 European countries that aimed at documenting the status and quality of bimodal bilingual education²⁴. This paper presents our analysis of three dozen laws relating to the use of a sign language in school and discusses the significance of legal foundations for the positive development of bimodal bilingual educational practice. It links the issue of legal recognition of national sign language(s) with the individuals' right to bimodal bilingual school education and the requirements by the UNCRPD.

1 Introduction

For the past 20 years, sign language researchers, activists and representatives in Europe have struggled to gain an overview of the legal context of national sign languages and the individual and group rights of sign language users. Recently, EUD has published an essential collection of European laws (Wheatley & Pabsch, 2010 and 2012). De Meulder (2015) has gathered a complete, worldwide overview of the various existing forms of sign language recognition, offering a critical discussion of the complex recognition terminology. But we know of no analysis of educational acts and curricula that form the legal basis for the use of a sign language in schools.

24 The project “De-Sign Bilingual” (2014 - 2016) was conducted by the following partner institutions: University of Vienna; University of Applied Sciences of Special Needs Education Zurich; Humboldt-University of Berlin; Comenius University Bratislava; Ernst-Adolf-Eschke-Schule, Berlin; Elbschule, Hamburg; SekDrei, Zurich; Brigittenauer Gymnasium, Vienna; Volksschule 1, Klagenfurt. This strategic partnership has been carried out with the support of the European Community. The content does not necessarily reflect the position of the European Community or the National Agency, nor does it involve any responsibility on their part. Detailed Information on the project and further results, see www.univie.ac.at/designbilingual (Accessed on 13 November).

In our study, we strove to understand the condition of bimodal bilingual education²⁵ in Europe and to look beyond the legal field to assess examples of good practice throughout Europe. In order to document bimodal bilingual educational practice in Europe, we conducted several intertwined studies²⁶:

- a quantitative study of current bimodal bilingual education in 39 European countries, including an analysis of the legal context;
- a qualitative study of eight good practice examples in Europe (see the second article by Krausneker et al. in this volume) in Chapter 3 a) i);
- a detailed quantitative study with headmasters of special schools of the deaf in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Slovakia.

In order to document the implementation of bimodal bilingual education we structured our study by using the dimensions of policies, practices, and cultures, inspired by the index for inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002):

1. Policies: school system, laws, curricula, teacher qualification, and cooperation with parents;
2. Practices: educational goals, classroom communication, teaching material and methods, diagnostic tools;
3. Cultures: attitudes of stakeholders (headmasters, teachers, parents, pupils, administration) towards bimodal bilingual education as well as school culture, cooperation of teams, and networking with researchers, deaf associations and clubs.

In this article, we focus on our data and results within the first dimension of policies, specifically analysing the legal foundations of bimodal bilingual education in schools throughout Europe.

2 Method

Data was collected in a sequential mixed-method design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010) consisting of several intertwined studies that covered all three dimensions, as mentioned above, but with varying focuses.

25 For the purposes of this study, bimodal bilingual education is defined as education with a spoken/written language and a sign language.

26 We would like to thank all participants and informants and especially our team members Jeanne Auf der Mauer, Tamara Bangerter, Katka Čertíková, Stefanie Klingner und Angelina Sequeira Gerado for their valuable support.

2.1 Sampling

We contacted colleagues in 39 countries²⁷ who work in the context of Deaf education, sign language linguistics, or National Associations of the Deaf (NAD) and asked them to nominate experts in their country who would be able to give a good insight into the current national state of bimodal bilingual education. Based on these - mostly overlapping – nominations, we elected one to three experts per country and invited them to participate in an online survey. Additionally, we also contacted all NADs (national member associations, or NADs of the EUD) and asked them to kindly fill in our questionnaire. Of these, 62 experts and 12 NADs returned completed questionnaires. Eight countries could not be surveyed.²⁸

2.2 Survey

The survey was conducted by means of an internet-based questionnaire in English, German, and Slovak, but experts could use any language they elected to use (including a sign language) in their answers and they could upload documents like laws and curricula. The final questions of the questionnaire were open and designed to invite experts to give their opinion on favourable and obstructive factors and the next steps for the establishment of bimodal bilingual education in their country. 52 of the 62 experts answered one or more of these open questions (most experts answered all three). Of the 14 NADs, 9 used this option to let us know their views, visions, and ideas.

2.3 Analysis

2.3.1 Data validation and cleansing

In most countries, more than one expert provided information by filling in the survey. Essentially, the experts' answers were very similar and usually supported or complemented each other. We compared all answers and resolved a few contradictions through communicative validation with the experts themselves or by asking another expert for their perspective.

27 Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom (without Scotland).

28 Kosovo, Moldavia, Monaco, Montenegro, Belarus, San Marino, Ukraine, Vatican City.

2.3.2 Open questions

The answers to the three open questions (obstructive and supportive factors plus next steps) were analysed with regards to content, then grouped and thus categories were formulated and the results summarised. All answers from experts of one country were grouped and looked at from a national perspective. In no country, the qualitative answers of experts and NADs completely contradicted each other, but everywhere they supported or complemented each other. We conclude that the data is highly relevant and valid.

2.3.3 Laws and curricula

Experts were asked to provide documents or links to legal foundations for bimodal bilingual education and could also comment on them. With their help, we built a database of laws that allow/prescribe the use of sign language in schools, laws that support bimodal bilingual education, curricula for bimodal bilingual education, curricula for the subject “national sign language” etc. This corpus was enriched by a comprehensive study of publications (especially helpful was De Meulder, 2015 and De Meulder, 2016) and our own additional research of laws.

With the help of (mostly) native speakers generally affiliated with academia, we created summarised translations of the relevant paragraphs of the laws and curricula that were only available in the national language. Thus, we created a vignette for each country. These vignettes were refined with the assistance of national experts until they were concise, understandable, and exhaustive. They pose the first European collection of legal foundations of bimodal bilingual education, encompassing 29 countries, and were made publicly accessible in German and English online: www.univie.ac.at/map-designbilingual/laws²⁹.

In our analysis of these national laws and curricula we asked the following questions:

1. Is there a curriculum for bimodal bilingual education and how comprehensive is it?
2. Is there a curriculum for the national sign language, how extensive is it, and to which pupils does it apply?
3. Are there any laws that support, prescribe, or enable bimodal bilingual education in schools?

29 The research team of De-Sign Bilingual is responsible for keeping this collection current and updated until 2020 and is grateful for suggestions, evidence and clues on legal updates.

4. Do our findings 1–3 indicate that Article 24 (3) lit b of the UNCRPD³⁰ has a legal foundation and implementation is thus secured in each respective country?
5. Do our findings 1–3 indicate that Article 24 (3) lit c of the UNCRPD³¹ has a legal foundation and is implementation thus secured in each respective country?
6. Which correlations are there between the legal situation and the results/items of our online expert survey?
7. What does a comparison - including calculation of correlations - of the answers to questions 1 to 6 with the data from our expert survey tell us?

Mindful that we are not legal experts, we did not employ a method based on comparative law or jurisprudence. Analysis of these laws and curricula was not easy, first of all because the national legal systems in place are so diverse that a direct comparison is often impossible. Also, in some countries the legal situation of bimodal bilingual education is opaque or difficult to access (e.g. Andorra, Netherlands, Turkey). This being said, it is worth pointing out that other countries even make their laws available in English and therefore internationally accessible (Iceland, Norway, partially Sweden).

Note that we could not compile a historical documentation of the development of each law and its amendments. Therefore, an analysis of the direct influence/effect of UNCRPD on national bills, law-making processes and legal changes was outside the scope of this study. What we will now discuss in this article is *current and enacted* law in Europe and its significance with regards to the UNCRPD.

3 Results

We will now first present an overview of the laws/curricula and country specific summaries, then discuss correlations with data from the expert survey and describe some insights into teacher training and the educational use of interpreters.

30 States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including: [...] (b) Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community”.

31 “States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including: [...] (c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.”

3.1 Laws and Curricula: An overview

In all 39 countries covered by this study, deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children have the right to attend schools. The school systems for DHH pupils have changed substantially: in the pioneer phase of bimodal bilingual classrooms (1970s and 1980s, depending on country) pupils predominantly attended special schools for the deaf. In most countries today (68 %, $N = 37$), more than 50% of DHH pupils attend mainstream schools, according to experts. Today, in five countries, there are no longer any special schools for the deaf (Andorra, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Malta), which means that for pupils in these countries the chances of receiving bimodal bilingual education are very small.

Within our study, we could identify legal foundations and/or curricula for bimodal bilingual education in 28 countries. Even a superficial look at the body of laws and curricula that are available makes it evident that there is a huge variety in legal instruments. Some countries have minimalistic one-sentence regulations that look like mere suggestions to us, and others have several laws plus detailed curricula that cover all 10 or 12 school grades. In general, caution is indicated when directly comparing countries, as due to the differences in the legal structures of educational systems, similar documents may have different practical implications. For example, a topic within the scope of a law in one country may be regulated by curricula in another country.

Table 1 shows that 25 countries have some kind of legal foundation for the use of their national sign language in schools: 17 of these countries have relevant laws, 7 countries have curricula for bimodal bilingual teaching and 17 for the subject “sign language” to back up teachers and schools who want to teach their national sign language. That means that there are currently 14 countries out of 39 in Europe that have no legal foundations known to experts, NADs, and researchers to support the use of their national sign language(s) in schools. These countries are not listed in table 1.³²

32 Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Scotland, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

Country	Curricula		Laws	Legal basis established for UNCRPD Art. 24	
	bilingual education	sign language		3 lit b	3 lit c
Austria		•*		~	x
Belgium - Wallonia			•*	•	•
Croatia			•	x	~
Czech Republic			•	x	~
Denmark		•		•	x
Finland	•	•	•	•	•
France		•	•	•	~
Germany		•*		~	x
Greece	•	•	•	•	•
Iceland		•	•	•	~
Ireland		•	•	~	~
Italy			•	x	~
Lithuania	•	•	•	•	~
Macedonia			•	~	x
Netherlands		•		~	x
Norway	•	•	•	•	•
Poland			•	~	x
Portugal	•	•	•	•	•
Romania	•		•	x	~
Serbia			•	x	~
Slovakia	•	•	•	•	~
Slovenia		•		~	x
Spain		•*	•	~	~
Sweden	•	•		•	•
Turkey		•		~	x

• = established ~ = partially established x = not established

* Only regional or for some students

Table 1: Overview of countries and their specific legal foundation for the use of sign language in school.

For each country, we tried to determine whether the national laws actually establish a legal foundation for Article 24 (3) lit b and Article 24 (3) lit c of the UNCRPD and thus grouped the countries according to three categories: *established*, *partially established*, and *not established* (see table 1).³³ If we sum up the results regarding Article 24 (3) lit b: 11 European countries have fully established a legal foundation to secure the measures, 9 countries have partially established it while 5 countries in table 1 have not established a legal foundation at all.

Regarding Article 24 (3) lit c, we can now see that 7 countries in table 1 have fully established a legal foundation, 10 countries have partially established it and 8 have not established any legal basis to implement the measures.

We will now provide a short overview of the legal background and foundation of bimodal bilingual education in the examined countries. These summaries need to be read in combination with the complementary information in table 1. More detailed descriptions of the legal documents and original texts, as well as all references, can be found in our online resource at: www.univie.ac.at/map-designbilingual/laws.

In **Austria**, the only legal document relevant for bimodal bilingual education is a curriculum for a non-obligatory subject Austrian Sign Language (ÖGS). Pupils may choose this subject where the school decides to offer it. In 2017, the Ministry for Education commissioned a project to develop a curriculum for a school subject ÖGS that covers all grades and takes Deaf learners as well as hearing learners of ÖGS as a foreign language into account. The project results should be available by autumn 2018 but the implementation is expected to take several years.

In **Belgium – Wallonia**, several laws concerning bimodal bilingual education for different age groups are in place, defining among others: placement, number of hours and teaching methods. Although there are no curricula available, this constitutes a comprehensive legal foundation. In **Belgium – Flanders** Flemish Sign Language (VGT) was legally recognised. Only one school out of five assigns VGT a status equal to Dutch in line with their bilingual school philosophy. This is supported by a curriculum that was developed by the school.

The **Croatian** law on sign language grants the right to education in Croatian Sign Language (HZJ), but this is only a declarative statement and does not promote any tangible actions.

33 The category “partially established” includes countries where the laws only apply regionally (like Germany) and countries where the law only applies to certain types of schools (Ireland) and also countries where the law exists as a mere declarative statement (Croatia) with very little actual power for change.

Czech schools develop their own curricula that are based on a common national framework. This legal framework allows for the implementation of bimodal bilingual education, with or without the use of interpreters. The two schools, which realise bimodal bilingual education, have not made their curricula publicly accessible, so it is not possible to assess their extent and quality. (One of the two schools was described in great detail within De-Sign Bilingual as a good practice model, see Chapter 3 a) i by Krausneker et al. in this volume.)

In **Denmark**, there is a detailed curriculum for the subject Danish Sign Language (DTS) including a detailed description of the different learning years.

In **Finland**, the law states that Finnish Sign Language (SVK) can be used as a means of instruction and can be taught as a first language. The curricula reflect this by detailing bilingual bimodal education and the subject SVK. In vocational training, interpreters can be employed.

French law grants the right to learn French Sign Language (LSF) and the right to choose between receiving a monolingual or a bilingual education. The curricula provide a foundation for the subject LSF for several age groups, but no curriculum for bimodal bilingual education. The subject LSF can also be chosen as an examination subject for the *baccalauréats général et technologique* (two out of three existing graduating certificates).

The 16 federal states of **Germany** are individually in charge of education, so there are no legal foundations at national level. Several federal states have implemented curricula for the subject German Sign Language (DGS).

Greek laws recognise education in and via Greek Sign Language (ENT). The curricula build on this right and describe bimodal bilingual education in detail for grades 1 - 9, including the subject ENT.

Icelandic law establishes the right to learn Icelandic Sign Language and to be instructed through it. There is a curriculum for Icelandic Sign Language and Icelandic as an integrated bilingual subject, but no bimodal bilingual curricula for other subjects.

In **Ireland**, the right to Irish Sign Language (ISL) and to interpreters is established in a law, but this law is mainly declarative as the corresponding curricula cover only the last two years of a specific track of the Irish educational system. Therefore, it only affects some deaf pupils and only during one phase of their education.

Italian law grants the right to use Italian Sign Language (LIS) in schools. Examinations can be taken in LIS or with the support of an interpreter. There are no special curricula as the law states that the existing curricula may be adapted according to the language/communication channel used by the pupil.

In **Lithuania**, laws grant the right to bilingual education with Lithuanian Sign Language (LGK), but the curricula do not provide a comprehensive foundation for this. Interpreters are mentioned as a possible means of instruction. There is a comprehensive curriculum for the subject LGK describing its contents, extents and targets.

Macedonia has a declarative law stating that pupils who are DHH should learn Macedonian Sign Language. No legal document states or promotes further actions in this regard.

The **Netherlands** has no clear legal foundation for the use of Dutch Sign Language (NGT) in education. There is a covenant between the government and several schools for the deaf, which exhibits a positive attitude towards NGT. But this is an agreement without any juridical strength. A part of the general Dutch teaching materials also concerns NGT as a subject for different grades. Generally, NGT is only involved in the policy of the deaf schools, not mainstream schools. The general situation is therefore vague.³⁴

Norway has both extensive laws and curricula for deaf education. Pupils whose first language is Norwegian Sign Language (NTS) have the right to instruction in and through NTS. The documents take a clear stance for bilingualism, stating that both languages constitute the basis of education. Pupils in upper secondary schools have the right to choose between education in a *sign language environment* or education using an interpreter in a mainstream school.

Polish law states that deaf pupils should receive Polish Sign Language (PJM) classes each week. The law defines the maximum number of hours but does not contain any details or references to a curriculum.

In **Portugal**, a law establishes the right to bimodal bilingual education and explains in great detail what this means. There are several curricula for the subject Portuguese Sign Language (LGP) for grades 0 – 12, building on the principle that LGP instruction for deaf pupils should be equivalent to Portuguese instruction of hearing pupils.

34 Many thanks to Corrie Tijsseling for her help in trying to understand this.

Romanian law states that deaf pupils are entitled to use Romanian Sign Language (LMG) in education, including the use of an authorised interpreter. Curricula describing bilingual education for deaf children exist but do not include a subject LMG.

The **Scottish** British Sign Language (BSL) Act of 2015 does not specify any rights regarding the education of deaf pupils. Still, from one of the experts' perspective, the BSL Act could be a foundation and therefore a first step in this direction.³⁵

Serbian law states that education for persons using sign language can be held in Serbian Sign Language (SZJ) but the law is only declarative and does not provide a course of action to implement SZJ in education.

Slovakian Deaf pupils have the right to use Slovak Sign Language in school. There is a law that includes the possibility of bimodal bilingual education and a comprehensive curriculum for the subject Slovak Sign Language to be taught in schools for the deaf.

Slovenia has several curricula for the subject Slovenian Sign Language (SZJ). They cover different types of secondary schools and up to five years of education. A Slovenian law grants the general right to use SZJ, but does not specify anything with regard to education.

In **Spain**, there is a declarative law stating that bilingual education for pupils who are DHH shall be established. In **Catalonia**, a provisional Catalan Sign Language (LSC) curriculum is in place and is being used.

There is no **Swedish** law for bilingual education but a comprehensive curriculum adapting the general national curriculum especially for bimodal bilingual education of DHH pupils. There are several curricula for the subject Swedish Sign Language (STS) in different grades.

In **Turkey** there is a curriculum for the subject Turkish Sign Language (TiD) that covers the first three years of education.

35 "In my view the BSL Act, though weak, does make these rights much more likely to happen over the next 5 – 10 years." Rachel O'Neill e-Mail to Verena Krausneker, May 12, 2017

3.2 Attitude, professionalisation and policies

Interestingly, the legal situation in each country closely corresponds to the answers the experts gave in our online survey. This is also confirmed by our Pearson correlation between these two aspects: If there are laws in a country, then bimodal bilingual education tends to be perceived as “well established” by the experts and if there are no laws, then experts perceive a lack in establishment of bimodal bilingual education ($r = .411^{*36}$, $N = 36$). Similarly, there is a correlation between national curricula and how experts see bimodal bilingual education ($r = .523^{**}$, $N = 34$). There is a moderate correlation between laws/curricula and training possibilities in sign language linguistics ($r = .460^*$, resp. $r = .456^*$, $N = 26$) and vice versa. This indicates that sign language competence alone is not sufficient to establish bimodal bilingual education but broader competences, like knowledge in sign language linguistics, are needed. Such fields of knowledge are only included in teacher training if bimodal bilingual education is backed by law and vice versa.

The experts’ statements about obstructive and supportive factors for the establishment of bimodal bilingual education are very similar all over Europe. Obstructive and supportive statements were classified as “attitude”-related, statements about qualification and professionalisation, and statements about policy were dominant. That means that experts view *attitudes* and *qualifications* of the actors involved as crucial when it comes to the establishment of bimodal bilingual education, as well as support by *educational policies* (e.g. laws, curricula). One important result of our analysis is that the existence of laws and curricula in one country are closely intertwined with the development of teaching material ($.432^* < r < .854^*$, $N = 28$).

3.3 Teacher training and professionalisation

UNCRPD Article 24 (4) asks State Parties to take appropriate measures “to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education.”

Our initial attempt in the research project *De-Sign Bilingual* was to document all national curricula for teacher training in Europe that explicitly include sign language and Deaf Studies. This undertaking proved to be impossible, because tertiary education has too many institution-specific curricula at different levels and few European countries have one national regulation of the matter. Thus, the aims of the original research project were thwarted, however, we received valuable answers from the national experts who

36 * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

took part in our online survey. According to the national experts, in only 9 of 39 countries are there existing comprehensive basic training and further education offers. These encompass the national sign language, didactics of bimodal bilingual education, the school subject national sign language, sign language linguistics, and Deaf Studies. In 21 countries, teachers and teachers in training have no possibilities to study these fields at all and other countries again offer training in only one or two of these fields. In France, teachers for primary and secondary level can qualify to teach their subject in LSF by passing an official examination.³⁷

We also found that teacher training and professionalisation are deemed extremely important by experts. In response to the question which factors were most favourable and most obstructive for the establishment of bimodal bilingual practice in schools the *qualification of teachers* was named second most often. Experts in half of the countries involved in our survey identified a total lack or meagre accrual of language competences. They additionally identified little to no teacher training to prepare for bimodal bilingual teaching. When asked what was needed for the future, experts in 25 countries described measures that can be summarised under the heading *professionalisation*, i.e., teacher training and further education for teachers, often in combination with better sign language competences, and the wish for professionally trained deaf teachers. For more information on the barriers that deaf students experience when trying to study to become teachers, see Chapter 2 f) by Leeson & Danielsson in this volume.

3.4 The Right to Interpreters

UNCRPD Article 9 (3) mentions “professional sign language interpreters, to facilitate accessibility to buildings and other facilities open to the public” - which does indeed touch upon the field of education as well. Similarly, a recent resolution by the European Parliament (EP, 2016) stressed the “need for qualified and professional sign language interpreters” (1) and explains that “qualified sign language interpreters and teaching staff competent in sign language and equipped with the skills to work effectively in bilingual inclusive education environments form an essential part of deaf children’s and young adults’ academic achievement, resulting in higher educational outcomes and lower unemployment rates in the long term” (36).

In our study, we did not specifically ask about laws that grant deaf pupils interpreter service at schools. We did find, though, that at least five countries have a legal foundation for the use of sign language interpreters in basic education. Those are the Czech Republic, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway, and Romania. This right is typically implemented as one possibility besides direct instruction via the national sign language. Most of those countries

37 See www.univie.ac.at/map-designbilingual/laws (Accessed on 10 November 2017).

also state that such interpreters should be qualified/certified. Other countries have regulations for the use of interpreters in vocational training or higher education or during exams.

From an educational perspective, providing interpreter service at school does not make a learning environment fully accessible and is certainly not sufficient to create a bimodal bilingual classroom. So we consider interpreters as one possible part of accessibility, but by no means a fully satisfactory bilingual classroom practice. "In contrast with provisions for other language minorities, there is thus no bilingual service delivery; it is merely service delivery in the majority language, mediated through an interpreter", state De Meulder et al. (in press), and continue to criticise that in most countries interpreter service is inadequate qualitatively and quantitatively. For an in-depth discussion of interpreters in education see Chapter 2 d) by de Wit in this volume.

4 Conclusions

4.1 Legal recognition is not enough

According to Leeson (2006), the legal recognition of sign languages does not constitute a sufficient basis for using these languages in schools. While it is an important starting point, it takes additional legislation to ensure that the school subject "National Sign Language" is legally secured and before time can be allocated to it in the lesson plans. One aspect of non-legal measures is assisting schools in developing their approaches and receiving the necessary resources so that they can implement bimodal bilingual education. These processes again need to be carried out by supportive actors such as parents, teachers, headmasters, and administrators. Bimodal bilingual education in teacher training seems to be an important key to sign language use in schools. Likewise, while ratifying the UNCRPD can give an impetus for developing policies that are in line with the Convention, such as provisions for instruction in and via the national sign language(s), the UNCRPD alone does not always provide a sufficient legal basis for sign language implementation in schools. As our analysis shows, only half of the surveyed countries have followed up their ratification of UNCRPD with a partial or full implementation into national law. Only 6 countries have fully established a legal basis for both Article 24 (3) lit b and Article 24 (3) lit c, as can be seen in table 1.

4.2 Legal sign language recognition is a good start

When we collated data by De Meulder (2015) with our analysis of each individual country's legal basis for bimodal bilingual education, a strong link became evident: of the 14 countries that have no legal foundation to support bimodal bilingual education, 8 (that is 57.1%) have not yet

legally recognised their national sign language, while of the 25 countries that have some legislation/curriculum/legal basis for bimodal bilingual education in place, 20 (80.0%) have granted their national sign language legal recognition.

We want to stress that legal recognition of the national sign language(s) is apparently an immensely strong driving force for developing and ratifying legal foundations for bimodal bilingual education and thus securing children's rights to their sign language.

4.3 Laws should cover everywhere and all

While we could show that legal, attitudinal and practical issues are intertwined and change needs to be planned and executed with these three areas in mind, we still want to point out that a strong legal foundation is prerequisite for sustainable change. In several European countries, the legal regulations in place are only valid in a geographically limited area (a county/province, for example) or for a narrowly defined group of pupils, like those being educated in one specific institution or type of school. Examples are Slovakia, where the school subject Slovak Sign Language can only be taught in special schools for the deaf. This, in effect, means that legal provisions and support for bimodal bilingual education have been written and are in place in many countries but not all pupils have access to and can benefit from it. Several countries have regulations that are so decentralised and opaque that not even experts in the field have an overview and can answer questions with certainty (e.g. Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Spain).

In conclusion, our analysis shows that in Europe there is a great wealth and diversity in possible legal forms of support of bimodal bilingual education for DHH pupils. This is an asset, as countries could look elsewhere and find interesting and worthwhile forms to adapt. It is also somewhat of an obstacle, because it makes comparison very difficult and one can hardly speak of any clear European orientation or tendency. The wealth and diversity in legal foundations for bimodal bilingual education should not obscure the alarming fact that there are still 14 countries of the 39 studied where DHH pupils and their teachers have no legal support for officially using, teaching and learning their national sign language in school education.

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2. Academic analyses

c) Bilingual Deaf Education: language policies, linguistic approaches and education models in Europe

Rachel O'Neill (University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK)

1 Introduction

This chapter discusses sign bilingual education in a European context. First, definitions of bilingualism are discussed, looking at how deaf children's language experiences are changing. Next, language policies are explored critically, as attitudes from many different actors affect how deaf education is organised. Next, we examine different models of sign bilingual education, showing how deaf teachers in particular contribute to bilingual and multilingual pedagogies. Finally, we look at language approaches in use in bilingual deaf education and consider possible futures for sign bilingualism. The examples in this chapter, separated from the main text by two horizontal lines, are from the authors teaching experience; they are presented as illustrations of some of the linguistic and social issues arising from bilingual education in practice.

2 What is bilingual education with deaf children?

We can look at hearing children's bilingualism in schools to consider different models of bilingualism (Baker, 2001). In many educational contexts hearing children from minority language communities experience *submersion*, as their home language is not used in the education system. Other education systems are *transitional* bilingual, in that they only acknowledge the use of the home language temporarily with the aim of encouraging the child to become fluent in the wider language of the community. Finally, *maintenance* bilingual approaches seek to maintain both the home language and develop the wider community language through the school system.

How far can this typology be applied to sign languages and deaf children when 95% of deaf children are born to hearing families, most of whom have no knowledge of sign language (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004)? It is difficult to use terms such as first language and second language in relation to deaf children, because the spoken language of the home may not be a stronger language for deaf children, as it may not be accessible to them. Increasingly, in a multi-ethnic Europe, the spoken language of the home may be different from the spoken language of the school system. With more deaf children attending their local school, their opportunities to see and acquire a sign language are becoming rarer, while their opportunities

to use listening and speech are becoming more widespread. Many deaf children may be experiencing submersion in relation to sign language, which they have seen and used very little, but some may now have opportunities to be bilingual in more than one spoken language (Crowe et al., 2014).

The cognitive advantages of bilingualism are shown from studies in co-enrolment schools where both deaf and hearing children have good quality language input in both sign language and spoken language. For example, Tang et al. (2014) have found in the multilingual setting of a co-enrolment school in Hong Kong that a strength in one language supports the development of others; acquiring Hong Kong Sign Language does not delay spoken Cantonese development for deaf children. Making an early start with signed and spoken languages leads to better outcomes for overall language acquisition. In Martin et al. (2014), an exploration of a co-enrolment bilingual school in Madrid shows that many deaf children pay more attention to spoken language as they start to use their cochlear implant (CI) more effectively, on average two years after implantation. Nevertheless, deaf children attending this school from a young age showed steady improvement in Spanish Sign Language (LSE) vocabulary and spoken Spanish vocabulary. In fact, many were bimodal bilinguals using both speech and LSE at different times.

From wider research, we know one of the cognitive advantages of bilingualism is the ability to keep both languages “turned on” in the brain and ready to work. Bilinguals can switch attention even when they are in pressurised situations (de Abreu et al., 2012; Melzi et al, 2017). There appear to be some differences in the way people inhibit the language they are not currently using between bimodal bilinguals (for example hearing children of deaf parents), and unimodal bilinguals (for example deaf people who use two sign languages) (Benjamin & Morford, 2016). Another advantage of bilingualism is the ability to understand other people’s perspectives better and the ability to clarify meaning and avoid communication breakdown. Research has shown that this is true for hearing bilingual children (Siegel et al., 2010), but less research has been done with deaf bilingual children in this regard. For more information about the advantages of early sign language acquisition for deaf children, see Chapter 2 e) by Hänel-Faulhaber in this volume.

However, many deaf children, though linguistically varied, are not currently receiving a sign bilingual education, even though there are well-founded advantages in being bilingual.

3 Changes within the deaf child population

The deaf child population has changed, partly as a result of medical developments and partly because of more general changes in European society. The introduction of new-born hearing screening in most European countries means that deafness can be identified in the first few weeks or months of life (Vos et al., 2016). This could be used to implement a very early start on acquisition of sign language, as well as of listening through hearing aids and CIs. In practice, however, the medical pathological view of deafness tends to support an early start only with spoken language.

Early screening, which often leads to very early implantation, also supports the focus on spoken language acquisition rather than bilingual bimodal language development. Research from Australia indicates that children implanted at 12 months or less have better word reading using speech at age 5 (Ching et al., 2014). However, there is also good evidence that early sign language aids the development of speech (Davidson et al., 2014); the children in this study had American Sign Language (ASL) from birth as they were from deaf families, aided with CIs from aged 1 – 3. This research suggests that transitional bilingualism is often in place in deaf education settings.

Furthermore, in most European countries the population has become much more multi-ethnic and multilingual as migration increases from former colonies (Penninx et al, 2016). For deaf children, the combination of these three factors—new-born screening, early implantation, and more diverse languages in Europe—mean that they may grow up using several spoken languages and sometimes also having access to a sign language. Importantly, there are also some children who will not develop any fluent language. These children tend to be those left behind in all education systems: children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, with less educated parents, and those with additional disabilities (O'Neill et al., 2014). The latter group of those with additional disabilities is a much larger group in the deaf population than in the whole child population. For example, in Australia, 26% of deaf children have an additional disability at age 3 (Cupples et al., 2014) compared to 3% in the whole child population (Maguire, 2011).

Although there have been some early identified deaf children for decades, and also multilingual deaf children in many cities, these issues of early screening, early CIs and multi-lingual families are now becoming much more common across Europe. In addition, a medical viewpoint sees today's deaf children as very different from deaf children in the past, leading to pressure from some to regard previous research about deaf children as less relevant, and the prospect of success with spoken language now described as certain for a large majority (Archbold, 2015; SoundSpace online, 2017).

These views can be seen as examples of language policy; though based on research findings, they carry language policies with them.

A final reason we need to be careful when describing the child deaf population is that countries vary in the size of the group they describe as deaf. In the UK, the range of deaf children includes children deaf in one ear and mildly deaf. These two groups make up 47% of all UK deaf children, counted in the biennial Consortium of Research in Deaf Education (CRIDE) survey about deafness levels (2015). Other countries do not count deaf children as much as in the UK and would certainly leave out unilateral and probably mildly deaf children, because they make no special provision for them. This means that international comparisons of the proportion of deaf children using speech and sign must be made carefully, with attempts made to compare truly similar groups of children.

4 Actors in the creation of language policies

When we think about language policy we are not just talking about top-down governmental views. Language policy can also be created from below on a micro scale as well as from above by groups of teachers, organisations and governments (Spolsky, 2007). Language policies often interact with each other and sometimes clash. Language policies include, according to Spolsky, ways of behaving with language, beliefs about language, and ways of managing language.

Looking at top-down language policies, one example we see is the Swedish government's policy towards Swedish Sign Language. The policy maintains that Swedish Sign Language should be established as a first language for deaf children, with official resources used to ensure that hearing parents also learn the language (Svartholm, 2014). Swedish Sign language is considered to be the first language of deaf children (L1), and written Swedish is considered as a second language (L2). The school system in Sweden also introduces other written or signed European languages as L3 and L4.

By way of contrast, in the UK, the government's assumption is that deaf and disabled children will attend their local school. This is seen, for example, in Scotland's Standards in Schools etc. Act (UK Government, 2000), and England's commitment to mainstream education guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (Department for Education, 2015).

Monolingual attitudes from the wider society suggest that parents will find it too challenging to learn another language. Most native English speakers in the UK are not multilingual, so the prospect of learning another language to use at home is intimidating for some. Since the 1985 Swann Report

(National Council for Mother Tongue Teaching, 1985), which examined ethnic diversity in the education system, the predominant language policy in the school system has been that minority communities could use their first languages for use at home or just in the early years at school. Thus, the attitude within the UK education system towards bilingualism is distinctly transitional.

Another top-down language policy comes from health services and companies across Europe where a pathological view of deafness prevails. This leads to a practice of providing parents with information about listening and speaking only, described as ‘treatment’ (Cochlear, 2017), discouraging them from using sign language because of a belief that it may impair spoken language development. Evidence to support either side of this point is still much contested (e.g. Geers et al. 2017, including Comments; Humphreys et al., 2012).

A top-down language policy called ‘Informed Choice’ has been prevalent in the UK since 2005, and coincided with the development of new-born hearing screening and very early cochlear implantation. This individual consumerist approach sees both languages laid out as options in official government materials, such as England’s Early Years Monitoring Protocol (DFES, 2006). The policy assumes that parents would decide between sign and speech, implying often that this is a one time, all-or-nothing early choice. In practice, however, there is no sign language intensive environment available in the early years for deaf children from hearing families to acquire British Sign Language (BSL) (British Deaf Association, 2015). The materials appear balanced, and contain detailed specifications about BSL development, but are rarely used by visiting teachers working with hearing families with deaf babies. No sign input leads to no sign development in the pre-school years, so there is nothing to record.

Teachers also impose language policy through the school system. For example, until about 2006, many local authority services for deaf children in the UK continued to state their policy was ‘oralism’ (using just speaking and listening) or ‘Total communication’ (often meaning using any method to suit the child, or using speech with some signs alongside) or ‘bilingualism’ (which in the 1990s often used the Swedish model of sign first, literacy as second language). The zoning of language policy by local authority led to inequality and caused considerable harm to deaf children. This practice has now often been superseded by the consumerist model of Informed Choice. Teachers’ organisations sometimes still express a preference for one approach, but generally this group has become less ideological in the 21st century, or more circumspect (see Leicestershire County Council, 2017, for example). Informed Choice is often a convenient language policy for teachers as it leaves the decisions to parents. However, it does not take into account the strength of medical influences parents often face to implant

and to not sign with their deaf baby. The viewpoint that sign language is a tool rather than a language and culture is still prevalent among many specialist teachers (e.g. Cambridgeshire County Council, 2016).

Other ideas also influence teachers of deaf children. The social model view of disability, where the child is seen as having an impairment, but the disability is caused by barriers created by society, is quite widely taught in initial teacher education (Srikala & Schlessinger, 2017). Ideas about inclusion focus on the role of the class teacher as the teacher of everybody, with no need for groups of children to be taken out of the classroom, or planning different activities for particular groups (Florian, 2015). These wider beliefs about inclusion can be seen as related to language policy: they tend to encourage teachers to a commitment to social justice and an understanding of social barriers, but rarely to an exploration of bilingualism or ways in which children are members of a particular culture, community, or linguistic group.

Surprisingly, perhaps, educational researchers can also promote language policy. This can be seen most clearly in the introductions and conclusions of volumes of empirical research in deaf education. The conclusions, apparently informed by this research, can result in new top-down policies such as Knoors and Marschark (2012), which proposed that sign bilingualism was most suitable for a small group of deaf children with additional disabilities, since, according to the authors, most deaf children can now acquire spoken language. The simultaneous use of speech and sign, referred to as Simcom, is advocated with little empirical evidence (Knoors & Marschark, 2012; Swanwick, 2016). Researchers also create bias in their methodology, often unconsciously. They can do this by not running tests on sign language skills in longitudinal studies of deaf children's language development (Ching et al., 2013), or by asking teachers to classify pupils' language use in surveys, when the teachers may not have the sign language skills to be able to accurately identify a particular approach used by their pupils (CRIDE, 2016).

Deaf organisations such as EUD (this volume), the British Deaf Association (BDA, 2017) and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) promote language policies showing, for example, opposition to the use of sign with speech in educational settings while promoting sign bilingualism (WFD, 2016). Through EU and UN frameworks, these organisations have had some impact on governments, for example by calling governments to account to implement the sign language clauses of the UNCRPD.

On a micro scale, families create language policies, too. Some hearing families decide to create a sign language space at home, even though this entails considerable effort. Organisations in the UK such as LASER (the Language of Sign as an Educational Resource) in the 1990s and the National Deaf Children's Society in the 2010s have created the possibility

of expressing these views in public and trying them out at social events for children (NDCS, 2017). Other families decide to use spoken languages of the home with their deaf child. Multilingual deaf families may decide to use two sign languages with their hearing and deaf children who over time also acquire one or more spoken languages from the wider family, kindergarten or school. These family decisions are examples of language policies, requiring a concerted effort to maintain.

The complex picture of language policies shows that they are often not imposed from above, as Spolsky pointed out (2007); there are many competing groups creating and changing *beliefs* about sign language and sign bilingualism. It is important to look at how social attitudes to minority and signed languages develop in different institutions, cultures, and communities. We need to consider the effect that these views may have upon changing the ways in which deaf and hearing people *behave* with language and their different perspectives on *managing* the minority language. Both top-down and bottom-up language policies remain a crucial area to be explored in relation to deaf children and language use.

5 Different models of sign bilingual provision

Across Europe there are many different types of provision available where sign bilingualism can exist (DeSign Bilingual, 2014). Deaf schools appear to be on the decline in many European countries, though there is little data available to document this. In Scandinavian and German deaf schools, there is a strong focus on contrastive analysis of sign and spoken or written language. This is less noticeable in the UK, probably because of the lesser experience of teachers with the meta-language needed to discuss language even in English. Explicit teaching of a sign language and information about Deaf culture are features of deaf schools rarely seen in other settings.

In an ordinary college, there are five levels of English classes for deaf students taught in BSL by bilingual deaf and hearing teachers. The group I am teaching are intermediate students of English with varying levels of fluency in BSL because of their different educational experiences. The target for one lesson is the use of structures such as: *As I was crossing the bridge, I bumped into my friend Salma*. The class uses BSL to discuss the use of the past perfect and past simple tenses in English and the punctuation. Students model other similar sentences in Signed English, which I type on a word processor, displayed on the whiteboard. Students discuss in BSL ways to improve the accuracy of their English sentences, and I amend the text. The students receive a copy of the jointly constructed text at the end of the class.

Ordinary schools and resourced schools³⁸ sometimes have deaf sign bilingual children who use interpreters. The qualifications of the interpreters vary depending on the particular country's viewpoint towards fluency in sign language. In these settings, deaf children are generally expected to acquire the language without any explicit focus on it (Tomasuolo et al., 2013). However, the European Union of Deaf Youth (2016) reports a positive example from Turin in Italy where both deaf and hearing pupils receive daily sign language tuition. More generally however, the interpreter, often unqualified, becomes the language model. The deaf child rarely receives instructions in these settings about how to manage a sign language interpreter, how to ask questions of the teacher, or how to use lip-reading when watching the interpreter for a summary. The very challenging interpreting assignments in a classroom with up to 30 participants means that the usually unqualified interpreters are not able to keep up with classroom dialogue and discussion (de Wit, 2011; Schick, 2005). Even when countries recognise sign language, the status of educational interpreters remains low: their pay is low, their qualifications are not usually understood by employers, they are not usually supervised, and they have few prospects for promotion. Not surprisingly, most qualified interpreters only work in school settings if there is no other work available. In countries such as the UK where most severely and profoundly deaf children are now mainstreamed (CRIDE, 2016), the combination of mainstreaming, no sign language tuition, and unqualified interpreters has led to a rapid loss of fluency in BSL compared to the generation educated in deaf schools in the 1970s. For more information about sign language interpretation provision in education as well as the potential and limitations of interpreter use in inclusive educational settings, see Chapter 2 d) by de Wit in this volume.

The influence of inclusive education has also led to the option of co-enrolment, available in some countries (Madrid: Martin et al., 2014; Hong Kong: Tang et al., 2014, etc.). Ways of implementing co-enrolment vary, but one approach involves two teachers, one deaf and one hearing, working together in one classroom. Again, there often is no explicit focus on sign language tuition, but both modes of the language of the wider community are potentially available to the deaf child. The teaching background of the deaf teacher is unfortunately often subordinate, but ideally both spoken and written modes of the community language and sign language will be available to all deaf and hearing children. Contrastive analysis comparing the languages and explicit teaching of the sign language could be used in these settings, but so far there have been few studies in this area.

38 Resourced schools in the UK, or Centre schools in Sweden, are ordinary schools with provision for a group of deaf children who mainly learn in the ordinary classroom.

Signing schools, meaning a school for both deaf and hearing children in equal numbers, are a possibility for the future. Signing schools run by deaf professionals take a step further than co-enrolment models by encouraging bilingual deaf professionals to teach deaf and hearing children using sign language, with spoken and written language being available as well. This is most likely to be of interest to parents of hearing children when the educational outcomes for deaf bilingual children are demonstrated to be better than ordinary schools. We could imagine this may happen in countries, which strongly support the national sign language and implement a bilingual, deaf cultural pedagogy. This process has happened in Scotland in relation to the spoken language Gaelic; parents who do not speak Gaelic make up the vast majority of families using Gaelic Medium Schools (O’Hanlon et al., 2010).

A healthy development in sign bilingual education would be to have many of these and other existing models available in each country.³⁹ In practice, however, few of these examples exist, and the children who attend settings involving a bilingual approach have often experienced interrupted schooling, only coming to a bilingual setting after the default mainstream schools, which only involve the use of spoken language, have failed.

6 Deaf pedagogies in sign bilingual programmes

Early work on sign bilingualism in the 1980s in the UK often explored the views of native deaf sign language users as language models (LASER, 1988). There were a few teachers of deaf children who were also BSL users, but there remained barriers which prevented deaf people from becoming qualified as teachers, including medical lip-reading tests and strong discouragement from the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (Teacher of the Deaf, 1973; also see Chapter 2 f) by Danielsson & Leeson in this volume). Since that time, there has been surprisingly little focus on deaf teachers in sign bilingual literature. Although there has been some acknowledgement of the errors of the Milan congress⁴⁰ in expelling deaf teachers from schools and for the century of enforced monolingual oral policies, there has not been a period of truth and reconciliation. Most teachers of deaf children are aware of the negative history of oralism, but it is rarely discussed in the profession. Overt discrimination from professional organisations of teachers for deaf children may have ended in the 1970s, but many small measures remain to discourage deaf people from working with deaf children. Acts of discrimination against deaf teachers in employment continue today. For example, employers sometimes question whether a deaf teacher will be able to teach speech, or they exclude

39 A number of such models are presented through concrete good practice example descriptions in the 3rd section of this volume.

40 The first international conference of deaf educators held in Milan, Italy in 1880.

qualified deaf teachers of deaf children by not calling them to interview and instead appointing a hearing teacher with no specialist qualification. At other time, jobs are advertised only internally within a local authority where no deaf teachers work (Mervyn, 2017) and schools sometimes do not provide reasonable accommodation to make the interview process or work placement accessible.

Ladd (2013) has set out what appears to be an essentialist view that deaf teachers innately have resources for teaching deaf children, which hearing teachers do not. Deaf pedagogies are proposed, including showing deaf children how they can overcome barriers through resilience and how they can view themselves as normal in their development and not as in need of remedial treatment. Other strategies are outlined by Ladd (2013) in more depth, such as the timing of communication or strategies to make a safe space for deaf children, peer teaching, use of drama and storytelling, or setting high standards. Detailed work from Ladd in this area has not yet been published.

There is useful research evidence from Sweden (Lindhahl, 2015), France (Mugnier, 2006) and Chile (Moraga, 2017) about what deaf pedagogies may look like in practice.

Lindhahl (2015) used 17 hours of recordings of signed discussion in science classes in a deaf school with two deaf teachers to evaluate strategies used with deaf teenagers. Lindahl sees translanguaging as a pedagogical resource, defining it as not language mixing, but moving between sign language, fingerspelling from the spoken language and writing. Teachers need to have a high level of fluency in both languages as well as subject knowledge to engage and move the children to a clearer understanding of scientific concepts. She sees depicting signs as being particularly important in developing dialogic understanding of scientific concepts, more important than agreed lexicons of sign language technical terms.

Mugnier (2006), in contrast, sees sign bilingualism as including spoken and sign language, fingerspelling and pictorial resources. Using classroom recordings, she finds that hearing teachers of deaf children largely ignore the French sign language (LSF) input from the deaf children, attending only to the spoken language elements, so tacitly encouraging a spoken language preference. Deaf teachers, on the other hand, attend to all channels in co-construction of meaning in classroom dialogue. For example, they move from French writing to LSF to spoken French to LSF back to writing as a common practice, allowing the child to respond in whatever language and mode they prefer. This researcher does not think it is only deaf teachers who could carry out these loops and co-constructions, but deaf teachers are more likely to have the necessary combination of linguistic skills and ability to promote pleasure in learning.

Moraga (2017) outlines the principles of deaf pedagogies: Deaf-same, egalitarianism, collectivism, visual communication, holistic and child-centred education, and interculturalism. She finds performativity, narrative, and humour used in classes with deaf teachers. These teachers, 15 deaf educators from Chile, created a safe deaf space in their classrooms, attended to specific pupil needs, and demonstrated how to live in deaf and hearing cultures.

This is an area which merits additional study, because where there are sign bilingual environments, teaching approaches are likely to become more bimodal as well as multilingual due to the changing nature of the child deaf population in Europe.

7 Language approaches in sign bilingual programmes

The literature shows there are many different language approaches within sign bilingual programmes, some informed by language policies from the past, top-down and bottom-up. Other approaches are linked to particular theories of language acquisition. Some (e.g. Plaza-Pust, 2016; Ardito et al., 2008) are generative, following the views of Chomsky that all children have an innate language acquisition device. Others (e.g. Bagga-Gupta, 2002; Swanwick, 2016) are social constructionist, drawing on theories of Vygotsky and stressing the importance of the social relationships with more experienced language users in a safe and challenging environment.

A widespread view initially informed by language policy from Scandinavia, which has spread through Europe's deaf community, is that the languages should be separated. This view has been critiqued by Bagga-Gupta (2002), who based her findings on deaf school classroom observations of language mixing. The view informing early Scandinavian sign bilingual education proposes that the first language of deaf people is sign and the second is the written form of the wider community's spoken language (Svartholm, 2014). Alongside this view is a discouragement of language blending in simultaneously speaking and signing. However, the existence of many deaf children with good speaking and listening skills can provide challenges to this viewpoint. Humphries (2013), on the other hand, from his perspective on practices in the USA, proposes that deaf teachers fluent in sign should also include speaking and listening activities as part of their teaching.

Mehmet is a Turkish student who arrived in the UK aged 10. He had previously worked as a shepherd and not attended school. The first hearing aids he received were not effective, so by age 16 he had only a few phrases in spoken English and a few BSL phrases. He was at risk of being language-less. An intensive language programme was started with him at college: one hour each week spent one-on-one with a native BSL user working on a BSL programme and one hour a week with a teacher of deaf students using a language experience approach based on spoken English and literacy. Many of the written stories we constructed were based on his early life. His other classes were interpreted by well-qualified support workers with fluency in BSL and English. At the same time, a review of his hearing aids allowed Mehmet to hear consonants for the first time. His spoken language in English and BSL developed well, alongside growing friendships with deaf and hearing students. Finally, he developed spoken Turkish which he used at home with his father.

Plaza-Pust is a German researcher who has meticulously charted the developmental profiles of deaf children in Berlin School for Deaf Children (2016), a programme, which emphasises the development of German Sign Language (DGS) and written German. Using a generative framework, she found little evidence of language mixing, seeing it only at points of transition between developmental stages. Her data was collected between 2001–2005, so it may not adequately take into account deaf children who use speech, though she does suggest the influence of hearing teachers' signed German may lead to some simplified written patterns showing influence from the spoken language.

An ecological language profiling approach is also favoured by Swanwick (2016; 2017), who proposes that teachers investigate the languages available to the child at home and school in much more detail. Swanwick, in contrast to Plaza-Pust, regards simultaneous communication in speech and sign as a naturally occurring or pedagogical tool, which adds to the total linguistic resources held by the child. Her work more accurately reflects the multilingual, multicultural background of many European deaf students, but it does not focus on the teachers' skill level in any particular language.

Simultaneous communication (simcom) has received more empirical focus recently with some contradictory findings. Mastrantuono et al. (2017) found that Spanish deaf early implanted CI users (5) performed as well at comprehension of speech with or without simcom, whereas deaf native sign language users (5) performed to this level in Spanish sign language

(LSE). However, the methodology of lab experiments often uses expert models who can speak and sign very fluently and simultaneously, rather than the real-life teachers who often have gaps and discontinuities caused by poor fluency in a signed language and weak co-ordination with a spoken one. Wang et al. (2017) have shown that amongst 36 11–14 year old students who watched a story in speech with signing and again with ASL, that comprehension was significantly better in the ASL mode than the simcom.

Even in many deaf schools there is often not a strong focus on actual development of the signed language, just an assumption it will be a useful tool (Audeoud et al., 2016). Evidence comes from very limited, if any, time devoted to the study of sign language as a school subject, not administering examinations in the language. These attitudes can be seen as legacies of oralism.

The English class at City College is producing subtitles for videos they have made in BSL thus using both languages. In the videos, they are telling stories about their lives and their contact with Deaf communities. The audience for these videos is their hearing families, who do not use BSL. The students report these videos have an important impact on their families' understanding of who they are.

In the wider applied linguistics research community, there has recently been much interest in translanguaging as a strategy used by bilingual and multilingual people (García & Wei, 2014). Researchers in deaf education contexts have started to use this term for the many examples of movement between modes, languages, and forms in deaf education sign bilingual settings (e.g. Swanwick, 2016). However, as we have seen, researchers use the term in different ways: Lindahl does not include speech, whereas Swanwick does. However, translanguaging has faced criticisms that can be argued also in the context of deaf education (Rampton, 2017). Concretely, many hearing practitioners teaching in sign language are not fluent sign language users, which could lead to translanguaging being used as a positive term for teachers' lack of proficiency in sign language. The term often hides power dynamics that exist between speech and sign, with sign language grammar and vocabulary placed at risk of vanishing if sign and speech are used together by hearing teachers who are not fluent in sign language.

8 Possible futures for sign bilingualism

Deaf communities have repeatedly charged deaf education providers with not listening to their concerns, one example of which is the low signing level of hearing teachers of deaf children (British Deaf Association, 2015; EUD, 2017). Although there are now European Framework of References (CEFR) sign levels available online (Prosign, 2015), the profession of teachers of deaf children remains generally uninterested in these levels, partly because of the preference for simcom and partly because of the lack of focus on the nature of this mixed mode. Currently, the minimum level of BSL skill set for specialist teachers of deaf children in the UK is Signature level 1, achievable after only 50 hours of study of the language (Scottish Government, 2007; National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2015). Many hearing teachers of deaf children see sign language as a tool, and they do not attend to requirements from deaf communities to raise their skills in BSL. There is considerable social segregation between deaf signing people and teachers, even in deaf school staff rooms. If there is to be a future for sign bilingualism, some areas for action include addressing issues of language fluency in sign, increasing the number of deaf teachers, and increasing the social contact between hearing teachers and deaf communities.

The degree of polarisation in research about deaf children and in relation to their education is still severe. Language policies and pedagogic practices could change through a combination of top-down actions (e.g. legislation) and bottom-up activities (e.g. co-enrolment projects) to influence the wider hearing society to embrace sign bilingualism and bimodality. This has been illustrated in Hong Kong and in other small-scale experiments. The more positive attitude towards sign language in the USA, along with more stringent legislation calling for qualified interpreters, has led to sign bilingualism being more widespread in the USA (Rosen, 2006). The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, in contrast, encourages countries to move from a special school model to more inclusive practices in the child's local area, without considering the implications for deaf children who use sign language (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017).

The Hong Kong example (Jockey Club 2010), although initially funded by a privately financed research programme, shows how it is possible for attitudes toward sign bilingualism and sign language in a culture to change. Deaf communities in Europe could engage more in shaping language policy, entering the teaching workforce, and putting forward their demands for minimum skill levels for teachers of deaf children and interpreters. For example, country reports for the UNRCPD monitoring could include information about sign language use, numbers of deaf children learning through sign in groups or schools, and employment

of deaf teachers (UN Human Rights Office, 2017). Maintaining previous language policies relating to a time before early cochlear implantation will not lead to success. Applying Article 24 of the UNCRPD to the involvement of teachers with disabilities in the education system, on the other hand, may prove more fruitful.

At the 2010 International Congress of the Education of the Deaf (ICED) a statement was made to apologise for the brutalities of the oral-only period (ICED, 2010). This statement was requested by deaf organisations, but greeted with incredulity by many of the conference delegates. In deaf education, there has been no period of truth and reconciliation in relation to deaf children's lives. Most teachers of deaf children have not engaged with a process of reflecting on these historical mistakes.

A more rigorous focus on the still unfortunately high number of languageless or linguistically restricted deaf children of today may help some hearing deaf education professionals move towards reconciliation. Another way forward is for education authorities and governments to listen to deaf community language policies, particularly in the area of sign fluency and the need for more deaf signing teachers. After a process of true engagement with these issues, sign bilingual policies and practices will have more potential for success.

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Biography

Rachel O'Neill is a hearing teacher of deaf students with 25 years of experience in UK schools, where she has used English as an Additional Language approach in the classroom with deaf learners. Rachel now lectures at the Moray House School of Education at the University of Edinburgh, where she is programme director for the Master of Science (MSc) in Inclusive Education, teaching teachers of deaf children and developing an undergraduate degree for fluent BSL users in primary education, the first of its kind in the UK. Her research interests include sign bilingualism, online reading, the achievements of deaf pupils, language policy, and language development in speech and sign. She works closely with the Scottish Sensory Centre, where she has been involved with the online glossary of BSL Curriculum terms for a decade, a Deaf-led project to increase the number of BSL technical terms and definitions in BSL for school subjects. She is the UK editor of Deafness and Education International.

2. Academic analyses

d) Sign language interpreter use in inclusive education

Maya de Wit (Sign Language Interpreter, Trainer, Researcher, Consultant)

1 Introduction

Historically, children who are deaf would attend a special school for the deaf (Betten, 2013; Moores, 2010; Tijsseling, 2014). Regardless of the language of communication in the classroom, deaf children typically communicated in sign language among themselves. In so doing, deaf children developed a shared language (Tomaszewski, 2001). In the last thirty years, perspectives on the education of persons with disabilities have shifted. Increasingly, the aim is to include⁴¹ persons with disabilities into society, closing special education institutions, and moving them into mainstream education (Brennan, 2003; De Meulder, 2016). In this chapter, the consequences of this shift will be discussed for deaf sign language users who are using a sign language interpreter. The interpreter in this case is the tool providing access for the deaf person to equal educational opportunities.

This chapter provides an impression of the regulations and policies in Europe regarding the right to education and the right to a sign language interpreter in that setting. This includes an analysis of who is responsible for organising the educational interpreting service and an assessment of the need for trained, qualified, and properly remunerated interpreters. Next, the potential limitations of an interpreter in the classroom will be discussed, such as the concept of indirect education and the risk of isolation of the deaf student. Additionally, best practice examples are shared alongside a model of indicators to consider when looking at the quality of life of deaf persons in education with an interpreter. The chapter closes with current and future considerations and opportunities for deaf students with a sign language interpreter in education.

It is apparent that due to the increase in deaf persons with cochlear implants, the use of sign language is more and more under debate, and especially the use of sign language with children who are implanted at a young age (Humphries et al, 2014). This chapter will not elaborate on

41 UNCRPD General Comment No. 4: "Inclusion involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and the environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences."

this topic, but rather acknowledges the view that the use of sign language is a human right for deaf children, as it is the only language that is fully and easily accessible to them, independent of the degree of their hearing loss. Thus, access to an interpreter is a starting point to creating equal opportunities in education.

2 Inclusive education

The relatively recent move towards inclusion of persons with disabilities in society has been supported by many stakeholders, including NGOs, and the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), by the EU and its Member States who are State Parties to the Convention. However, the position of Deaf-led NGOs, as well as researchers, such as Murray et al. (2018), has partly differed from other disability groups. These stakeholders emphasise the need for the creation of a sign language environment for deaf learners within the inclusive mainstream education for deaf learners.

Article 24 of the UNCRPD is dedicated to education. Murray et al. (2018) analyse the consequences of Article 24 for the deaf population and recommend that there should be no unreflective placement of deaf children in local schools but rather recommend the development of multiple models of inclusion.

Including deaf children and students in society means that an interpreter is needed for every deaf student in the classroom. Deaf pupils and students are usually scattered across the country and typically do not live close to each other. Thus, when they attend a school in the vicinity of their home, they will usually be the only deaf student in the classroom or even in the school (Brennan, 2003; Richardson et al, 2010).

3 Legislative provisions

The right and the use of sign language interpreting services vary greatly across Europe (de Wit, 2016). The legal entitlement to an interpreter is often limited to public services and legal settings. The next most frequently mentioned setting is education. A follow-up study by de Wit in 2017, conducted for the benefit of this chapter, on the status of sign language interpreting in mainstream education, found that sign language interpreting in inclusive education is typically limited to secondary education levels and higher. Thus, deaf pupils attend primary education without an interpreter. In general, no other measures to ensure accessibility are provided, other than maybe through a classroom assistant, as we see in some countries. Alternatively, they attend a school for the deaf. At secondary, and especially at tertiary level, a sign language interpreter can then be provided in the majority of the countries, and even this provision can be limited in hours.

The 2017 study was conducted among the same respondents of the 2016 study by de Wit. The respondents are representatives of national associations of sign language interpreters, or national deaf associations, or individual interpreters all from member states of the Council of Europe. The respondents were invited to participate in a short online survey on the status of interpreting in mainstream education in their national country or region.

Of the 41 national and regional respondents of the 2017 study, 25 reported that a deaf student or pupil is entitled by national law or regulation to a sign language interpreter in inclusive or mainstream education. In reality, of the 41, a total of 32 countries and regions indicate that they have sign language interpreters interpreting in some or more levels of mainstream education (see figure 1). The following countries that in general do not have a sign language interpreter at all at any level of mainstream education provided a variety of reasons for this absence, such as: sometimes they work with special needs assistants (Ireland), the deaf students attend special schools (Albania, Greece), there is no legal basis to provide sign language interpreting in education (Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia), sign language use is not encouraged among deaf children (Romania), and no formal training of sign language interpreters (Serbia).

	SLI in education in law / rgulation?	Kindergarten	Primary / Elementary	Secondary / High school	Tertiary / College or university	Vocational training	Adult education / non-formal training	Other
Armenia	Yes							
Belgium - Flanders	Yes			•	•	•	•	
Croatia	Yes		•	•	•	•	•	
Cyprus	Yes			•	•			
Czech Republic	Yes			•				
Denmark	Yes				•	•	•	
England, Wales & Northern Ireland	Yes						•	
Finland	Yes		•	•	•	•	•	
France	Yes			•	•	•	•	
Georgia	Yes			•			•	
Germany	Yes	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Hungary	Yes							•
Iceland	Yes			•	•	•	•	
Italy	Yes				•		•	
Kosovo	Yes			•	•	•	•	
Latvia	Yes				•	•		
Lithuania	Yes							
Netherlands	Yes		•	•	•	•		
Norway	Yes				•		•	
Scotland	Yes		•	•	•			
Slovenia	Yes		•	•				
Spain	Yes		•	•		•		
Sweden	Yes				•	•	•	
Switzerland - German region	Yes				•		•	
Switzerland - Italian region	Yes		•	•			•	
Albania	No							
Austria	No			•	•	•	•	
Belgium - Wallonia	No	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Bulgaria	No							
Estonia	No				•			

	SLI in education in law / regulation?	Kindergarten	Primary / Elementary	Secondary / High school	Tertiary / College or university	Vocational training	Adult education / non-formal training	Other
Greece	No							
Luxembourg	No							
Malta	No	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Montenegro	No							
Poland	No				•			
Romania	No							
Russia	No				•			
Serbia - Utloss	No							
Switzerland - French region	No			•	•	•	•	
Ukraine	No				•	•		

Figure 1: Deaf student/pupil entitlement to a sign language interpreter in mainstream education by law or regulation compared to the levels of education the interpreter most frequently interprets.

As mentioned earlier, there is a wide spectrum in the provision of sign language interpretation among various EU countries and regions. The variety manifests itself, for instance, in the type of provision determining the right to an interpreter: some countries stipulate such entitlements by law, while others get by with looser, non-binding regulations. Even within a country (e.g., Belgium, Spain, Switzerland) there can be regional differences or tailor-made arrangements. In addition, the right to an interpreter in education can vary between countries by the number of hours per week, school year, obtained prior degrees, or by the age of the deaf person. So, in some countries, such as the Netherlands, a deaf secondary-level student is entitled to have a fulltime interpreter in the classroom, in others, the student has no right to an interpreter at all, as is the case in Macedonia. Interestingly, there is no identifiable relation between the formal recognition of a national sign language and the right to an interpreter or interpreting service provision in that country (de Meulder, 2016; de Wit, 2016).

A good example of the provision of sign language interpretation in mainstream education can be found in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland. The deaf children are entitled to a full-time sign language interpreter from kindergarten up to any level of education and there is no age limit. Notably, in Norway, deaf children do not work with a sign language

interpreter until tertiary education, as they have a right to a teacher who can sign at primary and secondary level. In the Netherlands, deaf students are also entitled to a sign language interpreter at any level of education, but unfortunately only until the age of 30. After that age, the government does not pay for the interpreting services any longer in education, unless it is work-related continuing education. In these aforementioned countries, all the sign language interpreters must also have a bachelor's degree in interpreting in order to work as a sign language interpreter.

The 2017 study shows that in most of the countries, the school or parents or even sometimes the special needs services, organise the interpreting services for the deaf student until the tertiary level (see figure 2). This is different for vocational training and adult education, where it is mostly the deaf student who organises the interpreter. At times, more than one party is involved in organising the services.

	School / institution	Parents	Student / pupil	Special needs service	Other	N/A	Total
Preschool (Kindergarten)	12 30 %	7 17,5 %	1 2,5 %	7 17,5 %	3 7,5 %	10 25 %	40
Primary / Elementary school	17 39,5 %	7 16,3 %	2 4,7 %	9 20,9 %	3 7 %	5 11,6 %	43
Secondary / High school	18 35,3 %	8 15,7 %	6 11,8 %	11 21,6 %	6 11,8 %	2 3,9 %	51
Tertiary / College or University	14 26,4 %	4 7,5 %	13 24,5 %	12 22,6 %	8 15,1 %	2 3,8 %	53
Vocational training	10 21,7 %	2 4,3 %	15 32,6 %	9 19,6 %	7 15,2 %	3 6,5 %	46
Adult education / non-formal education	9 18,4 %	1 2 %	18 36,7 %	11 22,4 %	8 16,3 %	2 4,1 %	49
Total	80 8,8 %	29 3,2 %	55 6,1 %	59 6,5 %	35 3,9 %	24 2,7 %	905 100 %

Figure 2: Responsible party for the organisation of interpreting services.

There is no evident best practice for determining who should organise the interpreting services. As the interpreters are the experts in providing these services, it appears that they could also be the best to organise or assist the deaf student or their parents in arranging the services instead of the educational institution. In Belgium-Flanders, for example, the schools or the referral agency are currently responsible for organising the service, which can cause issues as they have less expertise regarding what services are needed. In the Netherlands, the interpreters can be contracted directly and the deaf student can choose the interpreter they prefer. The difficulty in that scenario is that the parents or student are not always aware of the difference in quality of the interpreters and lean toward any interpreter who is available.

4 A need for sign language interpreters

In Europe, the total number of interpreters has increased during the last fifteen years (de Wit, 2016). There are differences between countries, but overall the total number has risen. However, this rise has not lessened the perceived lack of interpreters. As a result of the increased inclusion of deaf persons in mainstream education, the demand for sign language interpreters in education has increased dramatically over the years (Antia, et al., 2007; Marschark, et al., 2005). Of the 45 respondents to the European survey conducted by de Wit (2016), 64% still report an overall lack of interpreters to meet the demand.⁴² Although the respondents do not indicate the shortage specifically for education, the lack of interpreters becomes apparent when comparing the number of interpreters and the number of deaf sign language users in a country (see figure 3). The numbers indicate that it would be impossible to have an interpreter for each deaf person in a classroom.

42 Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, England Wales & NI, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Scotland, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland-French, Turkey, and Ukraine.

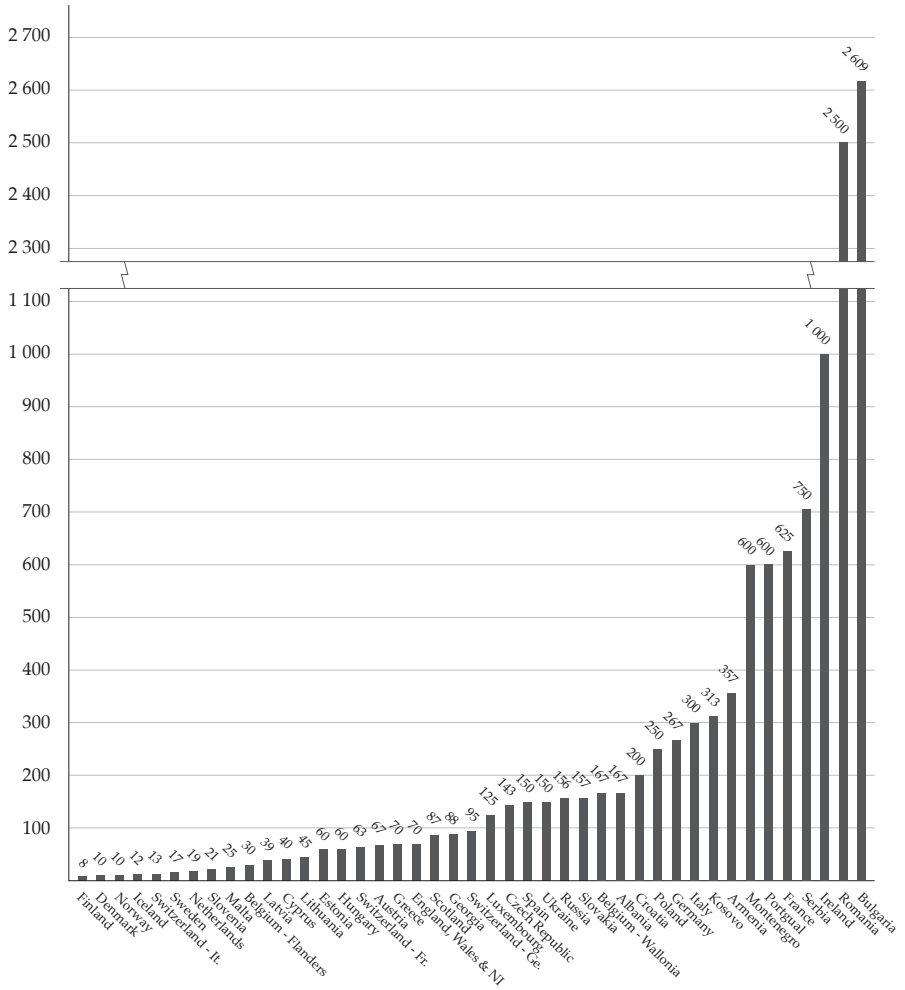


Figure 3: Deaf sign language users per interpreter per country/region (2016).

5 Status of sign language interpreters

The increase of the number of interpreters in Europe can mostly be tracked back to the increase in the educational training for interpreters. In 2016, a total of 87 programmes were reported in Europe (de Wit, 2016) compared to a total of 65 in 2012.

The level of education and qualification of interpreters is also a complicating factor. There are countries, especially in the eastern part of Europe, where interpreters only attend a course of a few weeks organised by the deaf community to become an interpreter. By way of contrast, there are other countries that require prospective interpreters to complete a bachelor's and sometimes even a master's degree in interpreting. In only 16 countries in the 2017 study of de Wit it is mandatory for the interpreter to have an interpreting degree in order to interpret in educational settings.

The level of training the interpreter acquired has an impact on the quality of the interpreting services. Interpreters work in all levels of education for deaf students, increasingly also in higher education. It can happen that the interpreter has a lesser level of education than the educational setting he or she is working in. All the respondents from the 2017 study by de Wit report that the interpreter does not have to have the same or a higher degree than the educational level they are interpreting in. In the USA, individual states have passed legislation where the educational interpreters need to be nationally certified (EIPA) in order to work in a specific educational level.⁴³ Not having received that level of education might cause challenges for the interpreter, when understanding the content of the lessons is a prerequisite to providing adequate interpretation.

During the last two decades, there is a new development in the sign language interpreter profession in Europe, and that is the establishment of national or regional registration bodies. These registration bodies are established to safeguard and monitor the quality of sign language interpreters. Most of them are independent and the stakeholders (e.g. deaf or interpreter organisations) have a supervisory role. Generally, the registration body admits sign language interpreters according to pre-set requirements, such as an entry examination or obtained interpreter qualification. Some of the registration bodies also register special qualities or qualifications of sign language interpreters, such as skills in interpreting in legal or mental health settings. The respondents of the 2017 study indicate that in their countries there is no need for a sign language interpreter to have a special or additional qualification to interpret in educational settings.

⁴³ For more information, see: <http://www.aslinterpretercorps.com/educational.html> (Accessed on 10 November 2017).

Another crucial element that impacts the status of the sign language interpreter profession is the payment. The data of the 2017 study shows large variability between the countries, therefore it is not possible to make a good comparison between the type of interpreting degree and the fees the interpreter receives, as in some countries the interpreters are employed by the educational institution, the interpreting agency, the national deaf association, or they work as freelancers. In addition, the national GDP also can have an influence as well as the regional differences within a country, such as in Spain. Another determiner is who is paying for the interpreting services: for example, the government, or private or educational institutions. In the majority of the countries the interpreting fee in education is the same as in any other areas, such as employment or leisure.

Inadequate compensation for interpreting services can lead to a low number and/or quality of interpreters. Various countries and regions (Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania) indicate that interpreters do not receive appropriate remuneration for the requested service, as a result they are unable to have only interpreting as a main source of income. In addition, the level of remuneration might not stimulate new professionals to pursue a career in interpreting or encourage current interpreters to further educate themselves. In Austria, there is a tendency to pay a higher fee for interpreting at universities than at lower educational levels. In Kosovo, the deaf students are stuck while a disagreement between the universities and the ministry of education regarding who is responsible for paying for the interpreting services for deaf students continues to be debated. In Germany, on the other hand, the hourly fee for qualified interpreters is set at 75 euros per hour, following the fee paid to court interpreters. The social services in Germany at times try to offer a cheaper alternative than qualified interpreters; nevertheless, parents fight to get a qualified interpreter for their deaf child, which can mean going to court to get the interpreting services their child is entitled to.

6 Limitations of interpreter use in education

If deaf students gain access to education through an interpreter, it is assumed that this will enhance their future quality of life and their chances to fully realise their economic potential and thus contribute to society in equal measure (EU, 2010; Hintermair, 2008). However, upon analysing governments' justifications of the right to interpreting services, these key objectives are rarely mentioned (de Wit, 2016).

Nearly all EU member states have ratified the UNCRPD, and therefore should ensure equal access to education, but this is not always the case. As the number of deaf students in mainstream classrooms increases, European governments face a growing demand for interpreters in education, and,

therefore, increasing interpreting costs. Higher costs can dampen the willingness to subsidise interpreting services.

Next to the financial barriers, other challenges and obstacles are identified, which need to be addressed when attending education with a sign language interpreter. In 2011, de Wit undertook a study to identify key indicators to assess the quality of life of 70 deaf persons enrolled in secondary and tertiary inclusive education with sign language interpreters. A model of quality of life indicators was proposed based on an international literature review, showing the domains and the related indicators that impact the quality of life of a deaf person in education with an interpreter (figure 4). The domains are interrelated and start with demographics, followed by family, educational institution, interpreting services, and employment. Within the domains, sub-indicators were identified as well (figure 5). The indicators from one domain showed to have an impact on the following domain. The higher the number of indicators completed or checked per domain, the greater the impact on the quality of life of the deaf student.

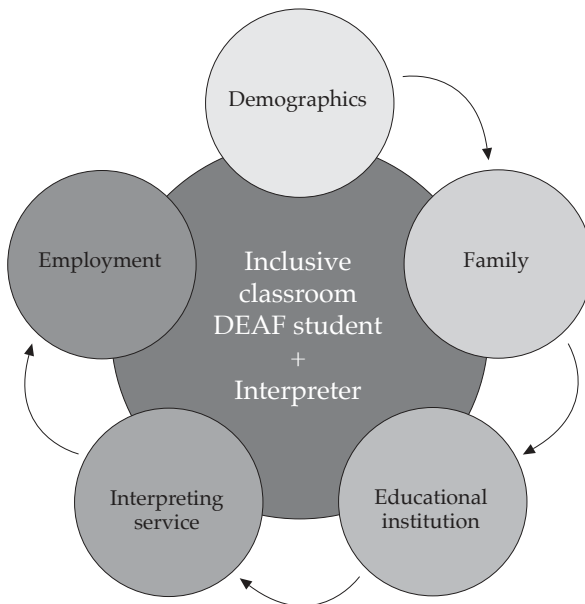


Figure 4: Main domains of Quality of Life indicators for deaf students in inclusive classrooms with a sign language interpreter.

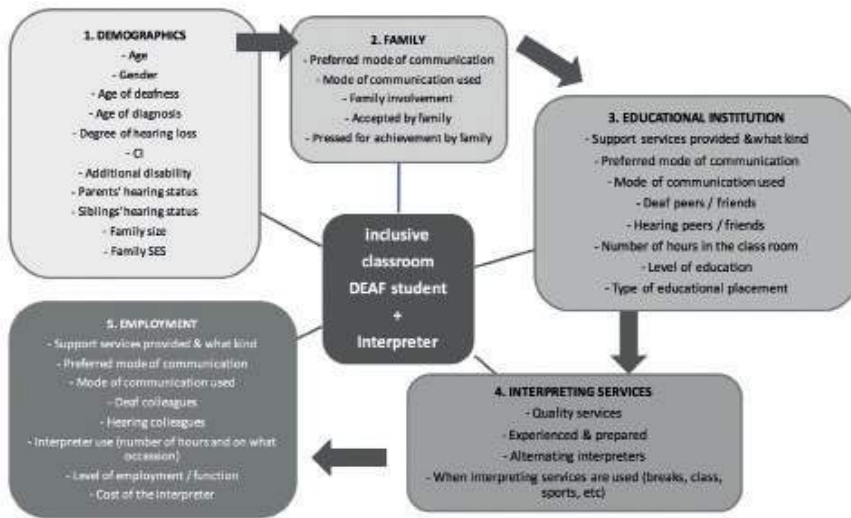


Figure 5: Subdomains of Quality of Life indicators for deaf students in inclusive classrooms with a sign language interpreter.

Using these indicators, de Wit investigated the impact of sign language interpreting on the quality of life of past ($n=37$) and present ($n=33$) Dutch deaf students in secondary and tertiary education. The past deaf students were no longer in an educational setting with an interpreter and the present students were enrolled in secondary education or higher with an interpreter. The results revealed that the current group of students were less happy being in education with a sign language interpreter, compared to those students who were previously educated using an interpreter. In comparison to the students who had completed their education, the current students report to have fewer deaf peers in the classroom, used less preferred methods of communication, and were less satisfied with the interpreter's skills. On a positive note, the current students reported to have more hearing friends, a greater feeling of acceptance by their deaf or hearing family, a higher percentage of preferred communication methods in the family, more consideration from the school towards the interpreter, and more satisfaction with the interpreter's professional attitude.

Maybe unsurprisingly, the study also showed that the degree of parents' involvement with the school influenced the overall happiness of the student. The study showed that the parents of the group of former students were more involved with the school, compared to the parents of the current students, resulting in more support services at school and increasing the feeling of overall acceptance at school. The feeling of acceptance has a prominent place in the responses of the students.

In addition, the group of students who were currently in education did not face the lack of interpreters that the previous generation had faced. The current group were all provided with an interpreter and could even, in most cases, choose the interpreter they liked best. The former group indicated enormous appreciation of the interpreter who had worked with them, as there were so few available and they were lucky to have an interpreter. As now there was more choice, it seemed that this gave the current group the option to be more critical of the quality of the interpreting services, and the academic and social skills of the interpreter. Importantly, persons in the group of former students who completed a higher degree of education were now all employed, versus those with a lower education who were unemployed.

On average, over 90% of deaf children have hearing parents (Brennan, 2003; Mitchell & Karchmer 2004). As a result, sign language is not the parents' native language and parents would first need to acquire the sign language before they can use a full-fledged language in communication with their deaf child. However, there often is a lack of information provided to hearing parents about the importance of sign language and they are frequently encouraged by medical professionals to primarily teach their deaf child spoken language, rather than learning and communicating in sign language, which some parents might also perceive as too much of a challenge. In such a case, the school-aged deaf child might not have acquired sign language as a first language and sign language interpretation might neither be sufficient to provide full accessibility of the educational content nor to replace sign language acquisition in the family or through a signing teacher and a signing deaf peer group.

Additionally, it needs to be considered that the sign language interpreter profession primarily evolved from hearing children of deaf parents informally interpreting without having had the opportunity to attend a formal training for interpreters. However, the majority of sign language interpreters today do not have deaf family members and have learned sign language as a foreign language later in life. Thus, in many classroom settings, the deaf student and the interpreter are both the only signers and non-native signers. Both will not be exposed during the day to other signers and as a consequence have a limited range of sign language input.

An added complexity is that children need to learn how to work with an interpreter (Schick, 2008). When starting mainstream education, they are unaware of what the role of the interpreter is and what their shared responsibility is to ensure quality access to their education.

Most importantly, what is often overlooked is the fact that the deaf student with a sign language interpreter in the classroom is educated indirectly: all education is mediated through the interpreter and the deaf student is

never taught directly by the teacher. Whatever is being said and no matter who says it, the deaf student needs to look at the interpreter to access that information. This so called interpreted education (Schick, 2008) affects the student's learning. For example, an interpretation is always based on the understanding of the interpreter and the decisions that he or she makes. In addition to the fact that information gets lost in interpretation, it also requires the continuously high attention span of the deaf person to watch the interpreter all day. Next to frontal teaching, classrooms are filled with a range of interactions that require the flexibility of the student and the interpreter to constantly adjust. The teacher has a key role and the potential to facilitate the communication access and participation of the deaf student or, in failing to do so, risks limiting it (Stinson, 1996). When working with a sign language interpreter in the classroom, the teacher must focus on their communication skills and at the same time be informed, along with the student, regarding the best strategies for using interpreters effectively in the classroom (Antia, 2009). Also, how much interpretation is needed during informal moments depends on the communication possibilities of the deaf student, the peers, and the teachers.

In summary, making the classroom accessible for the deaf students requires a set of skills and involvement of all interlocutors. Bearing in mind all of the above elements to make the classroom accessible, the deaf learner who is mainstreamed individually is still at risk of being highly dependent on the sign language interpreter in the classroom for communication access and for language acquisition as well as personal and social development when there are no deaf peers around. However, taking these elements into consideration will reduce the risk of social isolation of the single deaf student in the classroom. For a full overview of all considerations to enhance the quality of life of the deaf student in the classroom, see de Wit (2011).

7 Best practices

The indicators of quality of life for deaf persons with a sign language interpreter in the inclusive classroom can be used as a framework to guide parents and educational institutions (figure 4). In the family domain, one very important indicator is the feeling of acceptance by the deaf student by their family. This appears to have a major impact on the rest of their development and their success in mainstream education with a sign language interpreter. The advantage of attending mainstream education with an interpreter is that the deaf pupil can live with their family and attend a school of their choice nearby. As was shown in the 2011 study by de Wit, students also indicated that they have more hearing friends now, as they are in an inclusive setting, which has a more diverse population of students than ever before.

The provision of sign language interpreting services also gives the student the option at secondary level of education and higher to choose a study of their interest. In the past, deaf students were educated at a deaf institute and received vocational training in a limited number of practical professions, such as shoemaking or tailoring. Education was not made accessible through sign language interpreting services and only an exceptional few were able to succeed in mainstream education.

When specifically considering the quality of the interpreting services it should be noted that this has an enormous impact on the active involvement of the deaf student in the inclusive classroom and, as a result, on higher academic success (Schick, 2005). A highly professionally trained interpreter must collaborate closely with the teacher in order to ensure optimal and equal participation of the deaf student. Information and awareness are the key elements that need to be in place to ensure quality interpretation in the classroom.

Best practices of sign language interpreter use in mainstream education tend to be in those countries where the use of sign language is encouraged and accepted from an early age. Such practices can be found in educational institutions that value the deaf learners' environment and respect the variety of sign language input, understand the need for deaf peers, and teach in sign language in combination with sign language interpretation.

8 Discussion

In this chapter, an outline was presented on the challenges and opportunities for deaf students when attending mainstream education with a sign language interpreter, as well as the barriers and expectations interpreters are faced with as professionals.

To ensure equal opportunities in education for deaf sign language users, it appears to be insufficient for governments to simply provide the entitlement to having a sign language interpreter in educational settings. The professional qualities of the interpreter need to match the circumstances, which can only be achieved by proper formal training, adequate payment, and quality registration. At the same time, a coherent policy and agreement needs to be in place regarding how to optimise the deaf student's participation and to ensure the feeling of acceptance by peers in the classroom. Both aspects can be achieved by creating further awareness of the needs of all stakeholders involved.

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Biography

Maya de Wit is a certified sign language interpreter with a MSc in the European Master of Sign Language Interpreting (EUMASLI) whose working languages include International Sign, Dutch Sign Language, American Sign Language, as well as spoken English, German, and Dutch. She regularly interprets at the EU institutions, United Nations, Council of Europe, and other international organisations.

Author of “Sign Language Interpreting in Europe,” a book that saw its fifth revised edition published last year, de Wit has been tracking the development of the profession in over 45 European countries and regions since 2000. de Wit delivers training and consultancy on topics such as optimising the cooperation between consumers and spoken and sign language interpreters, sign language interpreting techniques for high-level settings, and raising professional standards of sign language interpreters.

From 2006 to 2012, de Wit was the president of efsli, the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters. She was the first sign language interpreter to become a member of AIIC and currently she is the coordinator of the global AIIC Sign Language Network.

2. Academic analyses

e) The impact of early sign language access - implications for early intervention

Barbara Hänel-Faulhaber (University of Hamburg, Germany)

1 Sensitive periods for language acquisition

One of the crucial issues in the research of bilingualism is the influence of the age of acquisition (AoA) on language learning (Meisel, 2011). The fact that children acquire language much faster, more efficiently and to a higher proficiency level than adults acquire a second language (L2) is due to the so called “sensitive” period for language acquisition, in which humans are especially ready to learn languages (Lenneberg, 1967). Regarding spoken languages, there is a considerable body of evidence that grammatical aspects of language are specifically affected by age of acquisition (De Groot & Kroll, 1997; Hahne, 2001; Wartenburger et al., 2003; Weber-Fox & Neville, 1996).

Hearing children usually have access to at least one language on schedule by their parents, whereas in the case of Deaf children, only those born to Deaf parents acquire sign language from the beginning by their parents and siblings. By contrast, Deaf children who are born to hearing parents often use communication devices (e.g. manually coded English), which do not fulfil the criteria of a natural language. These individuals are usually exposed relatively late to sign language, most often at primary schools for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing where they get in contact with signing peers and teachers. Sometimes, this occurs even later.

Research has consistently shown that Deaf people who grew up in a bimodal-bilingual setting outperform Deaf people with delayed sign language access. As is the case with L2 acquisition, the acquisition outcomes of Deaf delayed signers are much more variable. AoA effect for sign language spreads over different language domains and holds for comprehension as well as production (Mayberry & Eichen, 1991; Boudreault & Mayberry, 2006; Morford & Hänel-Faulhaber, 2011). For example, native signers recognise signs more rapidly than delayed signers (Dye & Shih, 2006; Mayberry, 2007; Carreiras et al. 2008) and they are more sensitive to morphosyntactic errors (Emmorey et al., 1995; Neville et al., 1997). In addition, there is evidence that the neural systems mediating a sign language learned on schedule differ compared to delayed (first language) learning. For example, in a study on phonological processing, MacSweeney et al. (2008) demonstrated that Deaf delayed signers activate specific brain regions to a greater extent than Deaf native signers during

a British Sign Language (BSL) location rhyming task. Since the greater activation of this region has also been observed in a less well learned L2 in spoken language bilinguals, the modulation in delayed signers points at an AoA-effect (Neville et al., 1997; Newman et al., 2002, MacSweeney et al., 2008).

Several studies support that delayed signers are not only at a disadvantage in sign language but also in learning and processing literacy skills. For example, Mayberry & Lock (2003) compared the L2 English competence of Deaf native signers, Deaf delayed signers and hearing native speakers of a different L1. Both native signers and native speakers performed similarly on a high level, whereas delayed signers performed significantly worse. Many studies found further evidence that sign language as L1 is one of the most effective preconditions to successfully develop literacy skills (Mayberry & Fischer, 1989; Mayberry & Eichen, 1991; Boudreault & Mayberry, 2006; Chamberlaine & Mayberry, 2008; Skotara et al., 2012). Studies on bimodal-bilingual children with cochlear implants (CIs) further confirm the finding that early sign language input aids children's literacy and spoken language skills. Davidson et al. (2013) reported comparable English language measures (e.g. vocabulary, articulation, syntax, phonological awareness) for bimodal-bilingual Deaf children with CI to hearing bimodal-bilingual children (Codas) and to hearing children of the same age. They conclude that early access to sign language does not prevent spoken language development using a CI. It might even lead to greater success.

Further confirmation comes from neurolinguistic studies demonstrating different neural correlates of spoken/written language processing in Deaf native vs. Deaf delayed signers. While Deaf native and delayed signers activate the typical brain regions for phonological processing during an English rhyming task, again, delayed signers activate the brain regions to a greater extent. This, again, points to a greater processing demand, due to delayed L1 acquisition.

Skotara et al. (2012) demonstrated that even when Deaf native signers and Deaf delayed signers do not differ in literacy skills, they activate different brain regions during a morphosyntactic sentence reading task. While Deaf native signers show the typical (highly automatic) neural correlates, delayed signers differ with an atypical pattern. Thus, the acquisition of sign language within the sensitive period activates brain systems that are vital to the processing of grammatical aspects not only for the first language, sign language, but also for every further language, whereas the atypical processing of the delayed signers points to alternative, less effective patterns of processing.

2 Bimodal-bilingual co-activation as advantage

Recent models of bilingual word recognition assume that language comprehension and production appear to be non-selective (Costa, 2005; Kroll et al., 2006; Kroll & Gollan, 2014): for example, when a word is read in either language, conceptual representations are activated for both languages.

Cross-language activation appears to be largely independent of the varying degree of phonological or orthographic overlap and of structural similarity of the languages concerned (Thierry & Wu, 2007; Hoshino & Kroll, 2008). Furthermore, cross-language activation occurs in low- and high-proficiency bilinguals (van Hell & Tanner, 2012). Recently, a few studies investigated co-activation of sign language during written or spoken word recognition in Deaf bimodal bilinguals. Morford et al. (2011) have shown that Deaf native signers judge pairs of semantically related words (e.g. bird and duck) more quickly when their ASL translation equivalents overlapped in sign phonology (e.g. BIRD and DUCK sharing location and movement). Accordingly, semantically unrelated word pairs were judged slower when their ASL sign translation equivalents overlapped in sign phonology (e.g. MOVIE and PAPER sharing location and handshape). Similar co-activation results have been replicated in an analogous experiment for German words in Deaf native signers of DGS (Kubus et al., 2015). This has also been documented for proficiency and language dominance (Morford et al., 2014).

Ormel et al. (2012) investigated possible cross-language effects of signs in written Dutch word recognition in Deaf children. In a word-picture verification task, Deaf children showed longer response latencies and more errors in non-matching word-picture pairs with sign translation equivalents with high phonological overlap (e.g. the written word *dog* and the picture for chair – the signs DOG and CHAIR show a strong phonological overlap) than in non-matching word-picture pairs without sign phonological relations (e.g. the written word *dog* and the picture for a comb – the signs DOG and COMB show no phonological overlap).

These results provide preliminary evidence that Deaf school-aged children co-activate sign translations during a written word-picture mapping task, which indicates that orthographic or phonological overlap is not required for co-activation to occur.

To sum up, the above studies provide evidence for cross-language activation between a written/spoken language and a sign language in bimodal-bilinguals. In educational terms, this co-activation might be one of the reasons why Deaf native signers outperform Deaf delayed signers: sign representations may help to build up and create access to lexical (and

even structural) representations of the words, particularly for Deaf reading beginners.

The research so far emphasises that early exposure to a sign language provides access to abstract linguistic structure that also has the potential to provide benefits for later language learning, as early sign language input can bootstrap literacy and spoken language skills, which holds for Deaf children as well as hearing children as well as children with CIs (Davidson et al., 2013; Hänel-Faulhaber, 2014).

3 Creating a bimodal-bilingual environment

Since it is rare for Deaf individuals to have signing parents from birth (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004), early intervention programmes must be responsible for early sign language access. Research on multilingualism has documented best practice suggestions for fostering bilingualism (see e.g. Tracy, 2007; Grosjean, 2010). These clues should be taken into account when thinking about each individual bimodal bilingual environment, and all the more when bimodal bilingualism is “planned” as is the case in Deaf children of hearing parents.

3.1 Authentic linguistic models

During the past, supporting early bilingualism stated the “one person–one language” strategy (Ronjat, 1913). This means that one parent should consequently use one language. However, multilingual daily life has shown that this strong language-to-person mapping does not work. Mostly one of the parents is able to understand both languages, e.g. English and German, whereas the other one does only know English. In that case, the language of the family will be English, e.g. at joint mealtimes. Research has shown that children can handle this kind of language switching with no disadvantage in learning both languages. Today, we know that the “one situation–one language” strategy also works and even better mirrors bilingualism in families’ daily lives (for an overview, see Grosjean, 2010).

Concerning Deaf children and bimodal bilingualism, inclusive early intervention programmes should first of all ensure that early, authentic, and regular input in sign language is available. Early and regular sign language interactions make sure that Deaf children can most effortlessly communicate and thus activate the typical processes of language acquisition. Ideally, professionals who are Deaf native signers would serve as the very best linguistic models.

In bimodal bilingualism, spoken language (with supported signs) and written language should also be available. Early literacy is most important here. It is important to note that sign supported spoken language is not a

language in itself, unlike sign language, and can thus not be considered an adequate replacement for sign language acquisition for Deaf children in the long run. However, it can be useful in a context of young Deaf children who are born to hearing parents who require a mode of communication with their child, while both the child and ideally the parents acquire sign language over time. The same applies to a context of inclusive early intervention programmes, where young Deaf children communicate with hearing children who have no prior sign language knowledge. The caregiver who communicates in (sign supported) spoken language must be bimodal-bilingual, i.e. he or she should be able to communicate in sign language, at least at the level of B2 (under the Common European Framework of Reference for Language). This is important to make sure that first, fully accessible communication between the early intervention team is possible and second, that in any case fully accessible communication between the caregiver and the children is guaranteed.

In order to be fully effective, the use of both languages should be linked either to persons or to situations. In inclusive kindergartens, the bimodal-bilingual team could for example arrange that breakfast is always in sign language and lunch time in spoken language (with supported signs) or that in some ritualised play times the communication mode is sign language, whereas in other play times it is (sign supported) spoken language. Despite these “arrangements” there will be spontaneous communicative situations either in sign language, spoken language, or code blended (see below) modalities. This is living multilingualism and should in no way be suppressed. However, it is important that the early intervention team and caregivers should be aware of their language strategies and reflect them in regular intervals.

3.2 Language input

Language interactions are important for acquiring languages (which never can be replaced by a language learning software). In case of bimodal bilingualism, this means that early intervention programmes should encourage and help parents to build up networks where authentic sign language interactions can be initiated. To get as much authentic sign language input as possible, joint activities with hearing and Deaf parents and hearing and Deaf children are significant: the more interaction, the better. Peer groups are extremely important, to stimulate not only language development but also cultural identity.

3.3 Separating languages

Babies are already able to separate languages (Werker & Byers-Heinlein, 2008). They do so with different strategies, including the strategy of focusing on the different language rhythms. Research has shown that 4-months old

babies perceive language rhythm aurally as well as visually by cues such as mouthing or language typical head movements of the speaking face (Weikum et al., 2007). It is obvious that Deaf children are also using these cues to disentangle sign language(s) and spoken languages(s) early on.

3.4 Language “mixing” and code blending

Research has convincingly shown that language mixing is systematic and explainable by each of the active language(s). Children use languages very flexibly, but they are aware very early of their different linguistic systems (Genesee, 1989; De Houwer, 1990; Paradis, 1996). Children combine languages in different ways and use them e.g. to temporarily close developmental gaps. In that sense, the one language helps to develop the other as a kind of “bilingual bootstrapping” (Gawlitzeck Maiwald, 1994).

Besides the serial mixing of languages, bimodal bilingualism allows for another type of mixing, namely the simultaneous production of spoken and signed languages. This phenomenon is known as code blending (Emmorey et al., 2008). In case of bimodal bilingualism, code blending is the most frequently occurring form of mixing. Interestingly, although in principle both linguistic systems could be produced at the same time, in most cases there is just one language active (mostly the spoken language) while the other lexical items are simultaneously produced to the active language (Emmorey et al., 2012). Again, this is living multilingualism. Bimodal children are very sensitive to their communicative partner. Pettito et al. (2001) and Genesee et al. (1996) documented that children adapt their code mixings and blendings in relation to the mixings and blendings of each parent. Again, this emphasises that also bimodal-bilingual children are aware of their different languages and even of the different language using strategies of the individual partner.

4 Conclusion

To summarise, knowledge of sign language is an asset that will help children to develop linguistic and at least cognitive skills. Bimodal bilingualism can be fostered by proven research principles of bilingualism. Accordingly, there is no doubt that sign language exposure and acquisition in early childhood intervention programmes is crucial for Deaf children. The challenge is rather to individually arrange bimodal-bilingual frameworks. Early intervention is in charge here.

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Biography

Barbara Hänel-Faulhaber is a professor for Deaf education at the Universität Hamburg, Germany. Her research focuses on bimodal-bilingual language acquisition and processing and its impact on learning. In cooperation with neuropsychologists and sign language linguists, she investigates the power of sign language for language learning and other cognitive functions. In one of her projects, she focuses on the evaluation of children's language development and communicative behavior in inclusive kindergartens.

2. Academic analysis

f) Accessibility of Teacher Training and Higher Education from a Deaf Perspective

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Special Education, Stockholm University, Sweden) &
Prof Lorraine Leeson (Trinity College Dublin, Ireland)

1 Introduction

This chapter is particularly concerned with how deaf sign language users access and progress through teacher education. The relevant article of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (United Nations, 2006) with regards to this topic is Article 24, Par. 5, which stipulates that “States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others.”

Teacher education is essential to fulfil the objectives set out in Article 24, Par. 3, which obliges States Parties to (among other things) facilitate the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community and ensure that education (particularly of children) provided to deaf or deafblind persons is delivered in the most appropriate languages and environments, which maximise academic and social development.

The access to tertiary education required by Par. 5 is an essential prerequisite for facilitating access for deaf children, given our assumption that children should access native language models to facilitate the transmission of both language and culture. Academics in the field of deaf studies agree on the importance of ensuring that deaf people can become teachers of the deaf. While some European countries have facilitated access to teacher training for a long time, many countries have failed to. For example, Ladd & Gonçalves (2012) suggest that: “One of the most telling indictments of Deaf educational systems is that despite their 250-year history, there exist almost no full-length texts which describe or analyse the praxis of Deaf educators.” Indeed, across Europe, it is difficult to estimate how many deaf teachers of the deaf there are⁴⁴, let alone what their experience of accessing

44 The De-Sign Bilingual Project provides numbers of deaf/hard of hearing teachers in EU member states that are based on information provided by national experts. This information is available here: <http://www.univie.ac.at/map-designbilingual/?l=en> (Accessed on 15 November 2017) (See category “Number of hearing impaired teachers” in the drop-down menu in the top left corner of the map).

teacher training, completing internships, and securing employment is like. Yet, as Ladd and Gonçalves (ibid.) point out, understanding these experiences is central to conceiving how deaf education can be reframed and redesigned to facilitate the kind of engagement imagined by the UNCRPD. Their essential focus is on ensuring that deaf teachers of the deaf are equipped to transmit language and culture in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways.

Yet, from the engagement that we have had with deaf and hard of hearing teachers⁴⁵ in preparing this chapter, it appears that in many countries, there are still significant issues surrounding access to tertiary education in general and teacher education in particular, as well as in securing employment as a teacher. Indeed, it proves almost impossible to find explicit reference to deaf or hard of hearing teachers in official reports. As a result, our discussion of the challenges that teachers face is predicated on personal communication with deaf and hard of hearing professionals in the field. For example, while the UK's Consortium for Research in Deaf Education (CRIDE) (2016) reports that there are an estimated 48,075 deaf children across the UK and 1,611 teachers employed as Teachers of the Deaf (ToD), there is no reference made to how many of these teachers are themselves deaf or hard of hearing. However, CRIDE also notes that there are some 106 deaf instructors/deaf role models/sign language instructors working in schools for the deaf across the UK, the majority (96.59) working in England. The European Federation of Associations of Teachers of the Deaf (FEAPDA) state that they have no official tally of deaf/hard of hearing teachers across Europe (Personal Communication), but that of the 1,350 members of the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf, an estimated 100 are deaf/hard of hearing. In the Republic of Ireland, there are an estimated 15 deaf/hard of hearing teachers of the deaf (Maggie Owens, Personal communication), while in Sweden (with double the population of Ireland), we estimate there to be at least 90.

Barriers to initial teacher education were widely reported by the deaf and hard of hearing teachers we engaged with, and by those who deliver teacher education. Here, access relates to meeting entry requirements and securing the supports required to ensure access to language is facilitated, once a place had been offered (e.g. funding for interpreters, for radio aids, etc.). Additional linguistic issues are identified in some countries where particular language requirements are an entry requirement for initial teacher education (e.g. see case study below concerning proficiency in the official language of Ireland, Gaeilge/Irish).

45 We would like to acknowledge the assistance of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), Dr. Elizabeth Mathews (Dublin City University, IRE), Dr. Audrey Cameron (UK), Rachel O'Neill (UK), Martine Monksfield (UK), Maggie Wooley (Ireland), Conor Mervyn (UK), Paul Simpson (FEAPDA).

Having secured qualification, there are also barriers that increase difficulty in accessing graduate education, ironically, including specialist training opportunities that lead to a Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) qualification. Deaf teachers in the UK report that access to ToD training is a barrier unless the teacher secures employment within a deaf education setting (i.e. a Unit, Deaf School or Peri/Sensory Support Service), in which case, the teacher's employer would be expected to cover training costs. It was suggested that deaf teachers consider self-funding their first year of ToD training and subsequently apply for funding from charities that fund deaf teachers. It was noted that enrolment on a ToD programme appears to open doors for deaf teachers in terms of accessing interviews for ToD posts and securing jobs. Difficulty in securing employment has been highlighted as an issue by those whom we engaged with, too. For example, it has been suggested that there are six or seven deaf teachers who could not gain employment in Northern Ireland due to a combination of lack of opportunities and to ToD posts being awarded to unqualified candidates. Irish teachers reported that there is restricted funding available for the provision of interpreters for job interviews, which, in turn, creates additional barriers for qualified deaf teachers seeking employment.

In the Republic of Ireland, the lack of availability of Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) training was indicated as an additional hurdle by deaf teachers: instead, candidates are required to complete recognised UK-based courses. However, one deaf teacher noted that they were not able to access the course in the year they were offered it, as the British institution did not have the funding in place to cover the cost of Irish Sign Language (ISL)/English interpreting. Another deaf teacher reported that they were not sanctioned (thus, not funded or given the appropriate leave required to complete the course) to take up a place on a Teacher of the Deaf course and, as a result, had to defer their place, in turn, potentially limiting their mobility and promotion prospects (See also Leeson, 2007 for a discussion of delays in sanctioning ToD training in the Irish context).

In a bid to illustrate more clearly the nature of the challenges that arise, we next present two case studies: one from a country where the national sign language has been recognised since the 1980s (Sweden) and one where the campaign for recognition is ongoing (Ireland).

2 Case Study: Sweden

Between 1965 and 1985, some 80 deaf and hard of hearing students have completed teacher training in Sweden. Most of these students experienced teacher training as lone deaf students in classes of hearing students, and while some had access to sign language interpretation, not all did. Yet others had the experience of being members of cohorts with two to five deaf students, with Swedish Sign Language/Swedish interpreting provided. In all cases, the courses were delivered in Swedish, though most also included some content about Swedish Sign Language (STS) and the cultural and social life of deaf people.

STS was recognised by the Swedish Parliament as the language of deaf people in 1981 (Wheatley & Pabsch, 2012). The first bilingual curriculum was introduced in special schools for the deaf and hard of hearing in 1983 (Lgr 80, 1983) and 1994 (Lpo94, 1994). Svartholm (2010) notes that the first 'bilingual' version of the Swedish National Curriculum, valid for special schools for the deaf and hard of hearing, was written as a supplement to the curriculum for Swedish schools in general and published in 1983 (Lgr 80, 1983). She also reports that the goal was to ensure that deaf children were provided with the opportunity to attain bilingualism in STS and Swedish, mainly in its written form. The supplement states that the languages of instruction were to be STS and Swedish - in its written form for deaf pupils, and in both written and spoken forms for hard of hearing pupils. Further, those pupils who could benefit from instruction through spoken language with the assistance of technical devices were to be taught in groups of their own, whenever possible. She goes on to note that: "The curriculum also included a definition of bilingualism for deaf children based on a comparison with its definition for hearing people. One position that the curriculum takes is that bilingualism in sign language and Swedish should be considered monocultural in that, in the main, the two languages convey the same culture. This reflects the position that Swedish 'deaf culture', i.e. the specific cultural affiliation and affinity created by the need for and use of sign language among the deaf, is a subset of the Swedish majority culture, not in opposition to it." (Svartholm, 2010).

To deliver the bilingual curriculum, Svartholm (2006) describes how deaf students who studied STS and Swedish as a second language for the deaf at Stockholm University had been offered complementary practical pedagogical education at the former Stockholm Institute of Education so that they could become credentialed teachers for special schools. This direct educational approach ended in 1985. A number of years passed before the Swedish government instructed the former Stockholm Institute of Education and relevant universities to develop a customised primary school teacher programme for deaf and hard of hearing students (1991/92:75).

Previously, those who wanted to work as a deaf teacher had to first complete regular teacher undergraduate training, work for a few years at a school and then complete a special education programme before finally commencing work at a special school. Now, deaf and hard of hearing students would be offered a direct education to become deaf teachers. In 1994, teacher training focusing on STS and Swedish at special schools was established and from 1994-2006 a series of five primary school teacher training programmes (with varied focus on linguistics, natural science, social science, for example), were launched, all focusing on teaching in special schools for deaf and hard of hearing students. These teacher-training programmes were delivered in STS. Deaf students who had chosen to become teachers for a specific subject area with the objective of working in a special school followed the same courses as students who were enrolled in regular undergraduate programmes to become teachers for these subject areas in a regular school. However, these courses needed to be made accessible for the deaf students through sign language.

The purpose of these programmes was to provide future teachers with the opportunity to acquire and deepen skills that are directly relevant to the profession and to develop teacher competence for work in special school settings. Over 20 deaf and hard of hearing students graduated from these teacher-training programmes and are employed as teachers at special schools. Their employment in this regard has also led to an increased knowledge base in these schools, particularly with regard to subject teaching in STS and Swedish.

For those deaf students who wanted to work as a deaf teacher, many had to first complete one of the training programmes described above. Many of them could not or did not wish to wait for these programmes to come around and instead, they attended regular teacher undergraduate training with sign language interpreting provided across their programme of study. They then complemented their standard teacher training with some elective courses from the teacher-training programme with focus on bilingual education and special education for deaf people.

An inclusive education system was introduced in Swedish schools (*En skola för alla* - An Education for All), predicated on the premise that education should be inclusive regardless of ethnic background, gender or social and other conditions. This system led to some new questions regarding the definition of a teacher training approach that would promote inclusive education, including the areas of competence relevant to all types of teacher training. The goal is that these areas of competence should be developed during basic training and then supported across a professional's working life via continuous professional development.

The Education Act from 2010 (Skollag (2010:800)) has led to changes in the Swedish education system, for example, there is a new focus on inclusive education. Today, there are regulations on what is required for a teacher to be considered competent and the level of teaching that a teacher can deliver is also determined by their training. Today, teachers who wish to be certified as competent to teach deaf and hard of hearing children must, under this regulation, have successfully completed primary school teacher training and complete an examination. As a result of this regulation, new special education training programmes were established in 2012. A consequence of these regulations is that they imply that the above-mentioned teacher training programmes for sign language using students are no longer relevant, even though these were designed and adapted for teaching at special schools for deaf and hard of hearing students.

Many deaf teachers have subsequently had to complete their teacher education with additional special education training to retain their work as teacher at special school. At least 10 deaf teachers have graduated as special school teachers for deaf children between 2015 and 2016.

There is currently something of a dilemma arising as to what this new system will mean for deaf children's access to a bilingual education. While STS has a strong position, and is protected by the Language Act (Språklag (2009:600)), it seems that STS will now have a somewhat different place in terms of bilingual education. At present, deaf and hard of hearing children are expected to develop their hearing and spoken language skills in the classroom and use STS when communicating with each other and with adults who are STS users. The idea is that all types of subject teaching should be delivered in spoken Swedish while 'signs' should serve as support for speech in the teaching environment. As a result, it may be that a bilingual mixed form emerges, comprised of different modes of communication and featuring Swedish as a dominant language and STS as an alternative and/or a mere complement to Swedish. An outcome of this may be that teachers will not be in a position to see the difference between these two completely different languages. This is an old dilemma, reported in the USA in the 1980s (Johnston et al., 1989). Johnston et al. outline how many teachers who were not themselves fluent signers assumed that they had signed complete utterances in American Sign Language (ASL), when in fact they had not. Instead, they had articulated the spoken message, but the associated signed elements were a reduced form of ASL, with key grammatical elements excluded, thus communicating in an incomplete and often confusing way with their deaf students. Clearly, we do not wish to see a return to such so-called "SimCom" approaches (i.e. attempts to use both a spoken and a signed language at the same time), which may disadvantage deaf learners and may undermine the potential for effective transmission of indigenous sign languages to new learners. Further, there is evidence to suggest that students who access information (stories, in this

study) in a unimodal manner (sign language only rather than SimCom) have better recall, which in turn, has consequences for educational progress (Wang et al., 2017).

Against this backdrop, current proposals are under discussion by the Swedish Ministry of Education, which has published a final report entitled “Coordination, responsibility and communication – The way to higher education quality for student with disabilities” (SOU, 2016: 46). The idea is to increase the students’ achievement of goals and enhance their rights in their own school development. One fear is that these moves may have consequences with regards to deaf students’ right to be taught in STS and to experience education in the sign language environment of a special school. There are also concerns that the concept of inclusive education might affect the opportunities of deaf special school teachers to teach deaf students in such environments. The worry among some stakeholders is that the report could be a move that brings us far from the goals of the UNCRPD, quoted above, and the Language Act (Språklag (2009:600))

3 Case Study: Ireland

In Ireland, teacher training is specialised depending on whether one will teach at primary, secondary or vocational educational level, or be a method-specific teacher (e.g. Montessori, Steiner). To gain entry to teacher training (indeed, all third level education), one completes the Leaving Certificate examination, where students typically complete exams in at least six subjects at a variety of levels across a one-month period following from their final year of secondary education. The exam is high stakes testing: depending on the level studied (Higher, Ordinary, Applied) and the results secured (points are allocated for each grade achieved), university and college places are offered via the Central Admissions Office (CAO).

For deaf students, several challenges emerge, first of which is whether they can secure the requisite points to access third level education in general and teacher training in particular. The National Access Policy is part of the Irish Higher Education Authority and was established in 2003. It sets targets and develops policy with the goal of increasing participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, including students with disabilities (Padden & Tonge, 2017). Padden & Tonge note that these targets have acknowledged the exceptionally low participation rates of students with disabilities, and most significantly those with sensory disabilities (Higher Education Authority (HEA), 2015). They note that the target for increasing participation of deaf and hard of hearing students nationally is to increase from 210 to 280—an increase of 70 students nationally between 2015–2019. However, they note that: “These very small numbers reflect the difficulty these students face in progressing to higher education. It should also be noted that the cost of supporting students from these disability

categories can be very high. For example, the cost of providing Irish Sign Language Interpretation for a Deaf student for one academic year is on average €18,000. Therefore, an increase of 70 students would require a dramatic increase in the amount of funding available to HEIs to support students with disabilities. What is missing from the National Access Plan are corresponding targets for schools to increase the educational outcomes for the most underrepresented students.” (Padden & Tonge, 2017)

Deaf students, given their designation as students with disabilities, are eligible to apply for the “Disability Access Route to Education” (DARE) pathway, which is part-funded by 18 participating Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in Ireland (*ibid.*). DARE is a third level alternative admissions scheme for school leavers whose disabilities have had a negative impact on their second level education.⁴⁶ DARE participating HEIs reserve several DARE places annually, allowing entry on a reduced-points basis while meeting the minimum entry requirements for a course. As Padden & Tonge (2017) note, however, if necessary support systems were in place at secondary level education, DARE might not be required at all. They argue that “ideally students would be given the necessary accommodations and support in school so that they could compete with their peers without disadvantage” (*ibid.*: 4).

In practical terms, students must apply for DARE while they complete their CAO forms, and assuming success, they can enter a bachelor programme and subsequently access a range of support services provided via the Disability Support Services at their university/college. These supports include ISL/English interpreting, note taking, and, in some institutions, the potential to submit work for examination in ISL (which is then interpreted or translated to English for examiners who are not ISL users). In this way, students can access most honours bachelor degree programmes, which pave the way for access to a postgraduate Professional Master in Education programme, the requisite qualification for secondary school teaching. Candidates can thus secure an undergraduate qualification in a subject or subjects that are taught on the curriculum in secondary schools.

For primary teacher training, the story is a little different. Candidates must complete training at one of five initial teacher education colleges.⁴⁷ To become a primary school teacher in Ireland, an honours Leaving Certificate qualification or equivalent in the Irish language (Gaeilge) is required for entry to either initial teacher education (primary) or to the Professional Masters in Education (primary). This is because Irish is the first language

46 For more information, see: <http://accesscollege.ie/DARE/> (Accessed on 15 November 2017)

47 <http://www.education.ie/en/Education-Staff/Information/-New-Teachers/-Initial-Teacher-Education-ITE-Primary.html> (Accessed on 15 November 2017)

of the Constitution of Ireland and primary school teachers are expected to teach Irish and to deliver the curriculum through the medium of Irish. This complicates things for deaf students. Traditionally, Irish has not been taught at special schools, which includes schools for the deaf. Indeed, there is an exemption in place for both primary and secondary level students who “have been assessed as having a general learning disability due to serious sensory impairment, and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue” (Department of Education, 1994, 1 (c) (iii)).

Such students are permitted to substitute another subject from the list of approved subjects for Irish. However, the composite effect is that no Irish deaf student has been eligible to train as a primary school teacher in Ireland to date. Instead, a small number of deaf people have studied abroad (in the UK or the USA) to secure primary teacher credentials, but this brings with it restrictions regarding where one can practice. At the same time, no clear data exists regarding the situation of deaf or hard of hearing people in Gaeltacht (traditionally Irish speaking) communities (Leeson, 2005).

Yet, some good news is on the horizon. Dublin City University has announced that they will roll out a Bachelor in Education where Irish Sign Language competence will be the entry requirement in lieu of Irish. However, conditions will attach to entry to this bachelor programme (it is designated a “restricted entry” programme): restrictions will apply for graduates that do not apply to those who access primary teacher training via the “normative” route, most probably surrounding the range of schools in which they will be eligible to teach. This programme will be brought forward for accreditation with the Teaching Council in 2018 (Dr Elizabeth Mathews, personal communication) and recruitment for the first cohort of candidates will follow.

As we can see from this country profile, the lack of formal recognition of Irish Sign Language in the Republic of Ireland means that ISL has not had formal status as a language of the curriculum or as a language of instruction (Conama, 2012; Leeson, 2006; Wheatley & Pabsch, 2012). Despite this, Ireland is one of very few European countries where it is possible to complete a university degree with a specialisation in sign language teaching. Trinity College Dublin has offered a four-year honours degree in Deaf Studies (ISL Teaching) since 2008. Graduates are recognised by the Irish Teaching Council, but can currently only teach in vocational education settings and not in primary or secondary schools. The reason for this is complex. First, in Ireland, Irish Sign Language is not currently a language of the curriculum, although the Department of Education and Skills’ Modern Languages Initiative has piloted a short course in Irish Sign Language in 2016-2017 in

several secondary schools and an Applied Leaving Certificate in ISL⁴⁸ has been available since circa 1995. Problematically, completion of this level of examination does not count towards matriculation (i.e. does not convert to CAO points, which are required to enter tertiary level for students). Yet, graduates from the Centre for Deaf Studies have completed the required Higher Diploma (known as the “H. Dip qualification”), the (until recently) established route to recognition as a secondary school teacher in Ireland (now replaced by the Professional Master in Education). Thus, we have many deaf (and hearing) graduates who have the requisite ISL and cultural skills required to teach, but who are currently not employed because ISL is not a recognised subject on the curriculum, although it is increasingly the language through which other subjects are taught (Leeson, 2006; 2007). For example, there are deaf teachers of maths and art in situ at present in Dublin schools for the deaf who teach through ISL, and, across Ireland, there are several hearing native and/or proficient second language users of ISL who are teaching at primary and secondary level.

As the Irish Deaf Society continues to lobby for Irish Sign Language recognition, we can say that the lack of mainstreaming of ISL in the educational system has the potential to significantly inhibit access to the language for deaf students placed in inclusive educational settings. They have limited (if any) access to Irish Sign Language and linguistic role models, which inhibits their potential for language acquisition and development in an age-appropriate manner. This, in turn, has the potential to impede their social development and progress as well as their academic development. It does not have to be this way. In 2011, the National Council for Special Education stated that “In Ireland, bilingualism means that the child attains fluency in Irish Sign Language (ISL) and in English or Irish (spoken and/or written).” They also point out that research suggests that access to such bimodal bilingualism “clearly does contribute to social-emotional and interpersonal growth” (Marschark & Spencer, 2009). We are currently at a critical juncture regarding language policy, and consequently planning, for ISL. Whatever the future brings, it is essential that the UNCRPD values regarding language are embraced.

48 <http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/curriculum/lca%20prog.pdf> (Accessed on 15 November 2017)

4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have presented an indicative snapshot of how the UNCRPD is impacting on access to tertiary education for sign language users, with particular reference to teacher training. While much of this evidence is anecdotal, it points to the significant gap in research surrounding the lived experiences of deaf students entering the teaching profession, and the progression of qualified deaf teachers across Europe in general, despite the provisions of the UNCRPD. Documenting how deaf sign language users can and do access teacher education, as well as subsequently gain employment as teachers, is a critically important process in evaluating the impact of the UNCRPD in practice.

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Biographies

Louise “Lolo” Danielsson has been a board member of the Swedish National Association of the Deaf (SDR) since 2011 and of the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) since 2013. Previously, Danielsson worked as lecturer at the Department of Special Education of Stockholm University and the former Stockholm Institute of Education, providing teacher training and supervising students doing graduate work during their teacher training. She also worked with some internal development projects on the situation of deaf students in various teacher trainings. Danielsson’s academic training has focused on behavioural science, psychology, as well as special education and now, as a PhD student in special education, she is studying sign language interactions in the field of education. Danielsson works as a volunteer for various projects. She also works a freelance lecturer while supervising and evaluating various trainings for deaf students.

Prof. Lorraine Leeson serves as Director of Research at the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, Trinity College Dublin (University of Dublin), Co-Director of the College’s Centre for Deaf Studies, and Co-Chair of the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters’ Committee of Experts. Her research work focuses on the linguistics and applied linguistics of sign languages, including interpreting studies. She has engaged in pan-European research work with academic institutions, Deaf communities and interpreting organisations for over 25 years. Leeson’s current projects include “DESIGNS” (Erasmus+), which focuses on deaf graduates’ access to employment and “Promoting Excellence in Sign Language Instruction” (European Centre for Modern Languages). In 2008, she was named a European Language Ambassador for her work. Leeson has been an interpreter for over 20 years and is co-author of “Sign Language in Action” with Prof. Jemina Napier, and co-author of “Interpreting and the Politics of Recognition” with Dr. Christopher Stone.

3. Good practice examples at European and national levels

a) Europe

i. Bimodal Bilingual School Practice in Europe

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1 Introduction

Bimodal bilingual educational programmes have been in place in Europe since the 1980s. Formerly associated with special schools in many places, these programmes have increasingly been implemented at inclusive mainstream schools since the 2000s, e.g. in the form of group integration where several Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) pupils are taught together with hearing children. Thus far, comparative studies regarding where or how bilingual classes with a national sign language are taught in Europe have not been conducted.

In 2015 – 2016, we⁴⁹ conducted a survey in 39 European countries with the aim of documenting the status and quality of bimodal bilingual education. The present article summarises our qualitative sub-study, offering examples of best practice from eight European countries. The objective of this sub-study was to describe different models of successful bimodal bilingual practice by means of qualitative comparison, which would allow us to deduce implications for the development of schools and teaching practices.

49 The project „De-Sign Bilingual“ (2014 - 2016) was conducted by the following partner institutions: Universität Wien (Austria); Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik, Zürich (Switzerland); Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (Germany); Comenius-Universität Bratislava (Slovakia); Ernst-Adolf-Eschke-Schule, Berlin; Elbschule, Hamburg; SekDrei, Zürich; Brigittenauser Gymnasium, Wien; Volksschule 1, Klagenfurt. This strategic partnership has been carried out with the support of the European Community. The content does not necessarily reflect the position of the European Community or the National Agency, nor does it involve any responsibility on their part. For detailed information on the project and further results, see www.univie.ac.at/designbilingual (Accessed on 10 November 2017).

2 Method

In 39 European countries, we asked several contact persons in the field of Deaf education, sign language research, sign language linguistics and Deaf organisations who they would recommend as an expert. The experts should have in-depth knowledge and a good overview over sign bilingual schools in their country. For most countries we gathered overlapping nominations of experts. Thus, we chose 1 - 3 independent experts in each country. In addition, we contacted the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) in each country and asked for their cooperation. A detailed online questionnaire was sent to a total of 81 experts and 33 NADs. 62 experts and 12 NADs filled in the questionnaire. Within the framework of this Europe-wide expert survey (see Becker et al. 2017, 6 et seq.), we posed several open questions, *inter alia*, asking for locations that successfully implemented bimodal bilingual education.

By applying two selection steps we included eight good practice locations in the sub-study:

1. By means of the following criteria, which were met by 28 locations in 13 countries, we narrowed down the results:
 - The bimodal bilingual concept had been in place for at least 5 years.
 - Bimodal bilingual practice was regarded as a success by the experts.
 - According to the experts, the school employed teachers with very high proficiency in sign language.
 - Deaf teachers were involved in day-to-day teaching.
2. The project team selected eight locations for the analysis, thus ensuring a wide geographical distribution, among other things. The selection of these examples does not reflect any hierarchy or depreciation of other schools, as there are additional locations in Europe that are worthy of mention as examples of good bimodal bilingual practice.

The data were collected between August 2015 and March 2016 by means of problem-centred interviews (according to Witzel, 1985). The interview partners in each case were teachers and/or school management representatives. The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via video conferences, lasted from 70 to 105 minutes, and were recorded using video or audio. Interview languages were German, English, German Sign Language, International Sign, French, French Sign Language, Norwegian Sign Language, Czech, and Czech Sign Language, with three interviews being

carried out with interpreters whom were selected by the respective interview partners. The interviews were transcribed, translated (if required), and evaluated following a structured content analysis (according to Kuckartz, 2014).⁵⁰ The schools were described using a framework of three main categories - policy, practice and culture, outlined in section “Description of the Locations” - and then compared to each other, which allowed us to formulate a number of practical inferences outlined in the section “Results of the Comparative Analysis”.

3 Results

3.1 Description of the Locations

In the following section, we will describe the eight bimodal bilingual locations (see Table 1), highlighting their school-specific and sometimes specific unique features against the backdrop of their political and practical dimensions (inspired by Booth & Ainscow, 2002). The first six models are special schools, followed by two inclusive models.

Location	School type	Staff
Manillaskolan Stockholm, Sweden	Special school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool • Primary school • Lower secondary school 	50% of the teachers have Swedish Sign Language (STS) as first language or are DHH.
Vyšší odborná škola, Střední škola, Základní škola a Materská škola Hradec Králové, Czech Republic	Special school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten • Primary school • Lower secondary school for DHH pupils • Boarding school • Transition apartments 	Approx. 50% of the teachers are DHH.
Elbschule Hamburg, Germany	Special school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early intervention • Primary school and lower secondary school with two departments each (spoken language, bilingual) • Support of DHH pupils at mainstream school with and without DGS 	Approx. 30% of the teachers are DHH.

50 We would like to thank our interview partners and the many persons who provided us with information, with particular thanks to our co-workers Jeanne Auf der Mauer, Tamara Bangertner, Katka Čertíková, Dominik Garber, Stefanie Klingner, Angelina Sequeira Gerado, Miroslava Tomášková, and Peter Gergel for their valuable support.

A.C. Møller School Trondheim, Norway	Special school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary school • Lower secondary school • Boarding school 	Approx. 50% of the teachers are DHH.
Tallinn Helen's School Tallinn, Estonia	Special school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten • Primary school • Lower secondary school • Upper secondary school 	Approx. 30% of the teachers are DHH, plus one DHH afternoon and boarding school carer.
Athens Special Gymnasium and General Lyceum for DHH Aghia Paraskevè, Greece	Special school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower secondary school • Upper secondary school • Technical vocational school 	30% of the teachers are DHH.
School Community Pfeilgasse (primary school and new comprehensive middle school) Vienna, Austria	Inclusive mainstream school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary school • Lower secondary school 	Approx. 50% of sign language teachers are DHH.
École Jean Jaurès Ramonville, France	Inclusive mainstream school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten • Primary school • Lower secondary school • Upper secondary school 	Kindergarten and primary school: 100% DHH teachers and hearing/DHH assistants.

*Table 1: Good practice locations, including both special and inclusive schools that were selected for the study.
(DHH = Deaf and Hard of Hearing)*

Manillaskolan, Sweden

Structure: Tradition and highly qualified team

Manillaskolan (founded in 1809) is the oldest school for the deaf in Sweden and has used Swedish Sign Language (STS) from the very beginning. The school is characterised by a long bilingual tradition and a highly qualified team. As early as in 1983, Sweden was the first country in the world to mention the national sign language in a curriculum, and in 1994, the very first curriculum including STS as a subject came into use. To this day, the 1994 curriculum constitutes an important foundation of bimodal bilingual teaching and was amended in 2011.⁵¹ A precondition for employment at Manillaskolan is a teaching diploma with a specialisation in special needs education.

51 For details on Swedish laws and curricula for bimodal bilingual classes, see www.univie.ac.at/map-designbilingual/laws (Accessed on 10 November 2017).

Practice: Team teaching

If required, teachers work together in teams. Groups of pupils comprising eight children or more are taught by two teachers (hearing-deaf or deaf-deaf teams). When pupils study Swedish or English as spoken language, classes are conducted by hearing teachers.

DHH pupils attend school for one year longer than their hearing counterparts. According to the curriculum, 725 lessons of Swedish Sign Language are to be taught in 10 years of school, which corresponds to 10% of all classes. Schools have the flexibility to determine the distribution of these lessons among the individual school years in order to adapt the lessons to the respective learning groups. Deaf Studies content is included in STS classes. According to the curriculum, Swedish (written language and spoken language) amounts to slightly more than double the number of lessons when compared to STS. English comprises 515 lessons in total and does not comprise British Sign Language (BSL) or American Sign Language (ASL). In seventh grade, bilingual pupils can choose between extra STS or English classes or add Spanish as their fourth language. The school has one full-time interpreter from whom the pupils learn how to work with interpreters during STS classes. As of late, Spanish classes have been taught by a teacher without sign language skills and with the support of the interpreter. However, interpreted classes are not considered ideal.

Vyšší odborná škola, Střední škola, Základní škola a Materská škola, Czech Republic

Structure: Bimodal bilingual classes under difficult circumstances

The school's manager has always been the driving force behind implementing a bilingual school philosophy, even though framework conditions have been challenging. She described the process of change as incomplete and very difficult at times. The Czech educational law states that "children or pupils unable to communicate in spoken language have the right to education with compensatory communication systems."⁵² However, neither legal rights nor financial resources can be derived from this law that would support the implementation of Czech Sign Language (ČZJ) at schools, which is considered a tremendous problem by educators. All teachers and other pedagogical staff at Vyšší odborná škola, Střední škola, Základní škola a Materská škola are required to acquire a high level of ČZJ skills and have had in-depth training. All deaf pedagogical staff has

52 For details on Czech laws and curricula for bimodal bilingual classes, see www.univie.ac.at/map-designbilingual/laws (Accessed on 10 November 2017).

gone through relevant training and they work as carers, general teachers, and subject teachers at all educational levels. Special education teachers must pass a state examination in speech therapy and deaf education. At the moment, not all teachers at secondary school have had training in special needs education, but they all have completed training in their respective subjects. Consequently, interpreters are strongly involved in everyday teaching from secondary school onwards. This interim solution with interpreters is financed via cutbacks in other subjects. Interpreters at the school must have - in addition to their interpreter degree - a university degree in special education.

Practice: Use of interpreters

The school supports DHH pupils of all school levels with the same goal: to provide them with education equal to that of hearing pupils. The location has had positive experiences with team teaching. Due to a lack of resources, however, hearing-deaf teams are only possible at the kindergarten. At primary school, teachers with a qualification in special needs education teach their respective subjects, and from secondary level up to the final examination level, non-specialised subject teachers work with interpreters. Class teachers are selected according to language criteria. In classes comprising a majority of DHH pupils, deaf colleagues serve as form teachers and teach the most important subjects.

There are numerous pupils with multiple disabilities enrolled in the school. Every child is individually supported and taught according to his or her intellectual capabilities. Not many of the teachers had been equipped for such strongly individualised teaching and differentiated educational schemes during their teacher training. ČZJ is taught from kindergarten up to the final examination level. From kindergarten onwards, separation of the Czech language from ČZJ is an important principle to make pupils aware of the differences. The subject of ČZJ is firmly established in the timetable with two lessons per week and is taught by deaf native signers. These lessons comprise grammar, culture, history, identity, life skills, and more. Pupils with an oral focus are also offered the subject of ČZJ because ČZJ competencies are regarded as a basis for successful communication in class. The number of ČZJ and Czech lessons varies as needed and the teaching load may be adapted, i.e. teaching hours dedicated to another subject as scheduled in the lesson plan can be reallocated. These rededicated classes comprise ČZJ as well as speech therapy. From secondary school onwards, the pupils themselves decide if they want to continue with speech therapy. English is obligatory from fourth to tenth grade with three lessons per week.

Elbschule, Germany

Structure: Everything under one roof

The most distinctive feature of Elbschule is that all units from early intervention to secondary school qualifications are united under one roof: there is a service department (counselling and early intervention), a department for oral DHH children (Dept. I) and a bilingual department (Dept. II). The various departments cooperate closely. Department II, which we will describe here, goes back to an initiative of parents who, together with committed teachers, fought for and enforced a bimodal bilingual school experiment at the beginning of the 1990s. A legal context is provided by the framework curriculum of Hamburg, within which an internal curriculum for the school was formulated that incorporated German Sign Language (DGS) as a subject and laid the basis for team teaching in Hamburg. The bimodal bilingual concept utilised in Elbschule's Department II has been written upon and published (Rörig & Poppendieker, 2013).

The body of pupils is heterogeneous, linguistically as well as intellectually and culturally. All teachers have special training in deaf education. A condition for employment is DGS proficiency or at least competencies in sign supported speech (SSS) for all teachers in Departments I and II.

Cooperation with parents is intensive. Since the school also offers early intervention, the school and parents maintain close contact. This also entails that parents are very active at the school. The school budget covers SSS courses for parents and families.

Practice: Consistent bimodal bilingual approach in language and content classes

Five lessons per week are taught bilingually by hearing-deaf teams. Originally this was only implemented in German classes, but today it sometimes also comprises other subjects. Deaf native signers are important members of the teaching staff, in particular if they have learned to communicate in DGS. With or without hearing aids or cochlear implants (CIs), deaf native signers are important role models for pupils.

Spoken, written, and sign languages are used integrally in different subjects and explained by employing contrastive analysis. From levels 1 (about age 6-7) to 10 (between age 16-18), DGS is embedded in the timetable as a subject with two lessons per week and is structured as "native language classes". Identity, culture, history, and practical life are included in this subject, and from levels 7-10, Deaf culture is offered as a separate elective subject.

In addition to German and DGS, Department II also teaches English from third grade onwards and these classes comprise ASL (expiring, only tenth grade) or BSL (all others).

A.C. Møller School, Norway

Structure: Close cooperation between special and mainstream schools

A.C. Møller School (founded in 1825) defines three categories of pupils: full-time pupils spend their entire classroom learning time at the school and some of them live at the boarding school. Day pupils are children who are partially integrated, living in the area surrounding the school. They are taught at A.C. Møller School 1–2 days per week, on the other days they attend regular schools that hold the main responsibility for their education. Part-time pupils live far away and generally attend a mainstream school, however, switch to A.C. Møller School for a certain number of weeks per year and in addition receive distance learning via video conferences. This model provides them with intensive support from teachers specialised in deaf education and allows them to have contact with a peer group. Even though almost all of the cooperating mainstream schools offer Norwegian Sign Language (NTS) courses, those schools do not provide sign language environments. At A.C. Møller School, all full-time, day and part-time pupils are provided with a context in where they can study without barriers and connect with NTS communication partners. There is a written, legally binding cooperation agreement between every pupil and the respective school determining the exact number of weeks that the child can spend at A.C. Møller School. The school rests on clear legal foundations.⁵³

All staff members are fully NTS competent, which is regarded as an “important factor for successful bilingual education”. NTS is also taught during university teacher training and is a precondition for employment. Teachers have very good training regarding content, but explicit special needs education is not seen to be as important as it was in the past. All conferences and internal meetings are conducted in NTS without interpreters.

The school is part of the Norwegian national organisation STATPED, which supports families from early intervention onwards. All parents of DHH children have a state-guaranteed right to approximately 40 weeks of courses.⁵⁴ For the time of these courses, which can be taken between the

53 Regarding Norwegian curricula and legal foundations, see www.univie.ac.at/map-designbilingual/laws (Accessed on 10 November 2017).

54 More information about these courses can be found here: <http://www.statped.no/Spraksider/In-English/temp/Professional-services-and-areas-of-expertise/?depth=0#6.3.1> (Accessed on 10 November 2017).

birth of their child and his or her 16th year of life, they are exempted from work. These parent courses (e.g. NTS courses) are, inter alia, conducted at the kindergarten next to A.C. Møller School, so that very often parents get acquainted with the environment and the staff. Central elements of parental work consist of classroom visits, well-balanced information comprising available study options, and summaries of academic research results.

Practice: Individualised intervention

All classes are taught bilingually and Norwegian and NTS are used to teach all subjects. Often, teachers work in teams comprised of one person competent in Norwegian and the other competent in NTS. The pupils' wide diversity is regarded as a challenge. Every child is treated and taught individually and according to his or her intellectual capabilities. Classes are taught individually, in small groups, or for all pupils together.

Norwegian and NTS are both taught according to a special curriculum. BSL is used during English classes, however, it is not a learning objective. The languages are set in relation to one another and integrated into the subjects. Regarding methods, school management explained that the teachers have developed from contrastive teaching to a "holistic" approach, while new methods are continually being researched and tested to ensure that the school continues to use the best possible techniques for learners in a bilingual setting.

Tallinn Helen's School, Estonia

Structure: Bimodal bilingual education without legal basis

Tallinn Helen's School was founded in 1994 as a bilingual deaf school and accommodates the only bilingual educational programme in all of Estonia where Estonian Sign Language (EVK) is used. Since 2005, the school has been structured in three departments, a department for DHH pupils, a department for blind / visually-impaired pupils, and a department for pupils with speech impediments. The department for DHH pupils focuses on the development of languages and communication skills.

Since not all teachers have sufficient EVK skills, some classes are taught with interpreters. All teachers have gone through formal training, but none of them has a qualification in deaf education or bimodal bilingual education. Any specialised knowledge and language skills that teachers have, they acquired on their own. Circumstances have changed enormously since the school was founded. The school constantly struggles for existence because neither the state nor the municipality are willing to fund the programme.

EVK courses for teachers are not funded. The situation is aggravated by the fact that school classrooms in Estonia are supposed to have a minimum of 12 pupils, a number which is never reached by the study groups in the DHH department.

The department employs one full-time interpreter and one teacher with interpreter training who serves part-time as an interpreter. There is no dedicated budget or subsidies for interpreters and the school has to work with the existing budget to make interpreting services possible.

Apart from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, there is no legal basis for implementing the bimodal bilingual programme.

Practice: Teaching under difficult circumstances

Team teaching is generally supported but not possible due to cost constraints. Teachers with good EVK skills teach alone and integrate both languages into their classes, while the others work with interpreters. EVK is thus always present despite limited resources, though present in different ways depending on the respective lesson and topic, study group, and teacher. In some situations, SSS is used as a middle way.

The school has supplemented the Deaf Department's curriculum with the subject of EVK. School beginners have three lessons of EVK per week, older pupils only two, sometimes only one. Performance assessments are conducted by deaf teachers, and annual report cards show a grade for the subject of EVK. Culture and identity are taught within the subject of EVK. The timetable also includes English as a foreign language, which is only taught as written English. All language subjects comprise more lessons than in mainstream schools.

Technical equipment is modest. What is particularly missing are a room for recording videos as well as high-quality PCs with cameras. At the moment, teachers use their private mobile phones for video recordings.

We selected this example to demonstrate that even under extremely difficult circumstances bimodal bilingual education can be maintained by a dedicated team.

Athens Special Gymnasium and General Lyceum for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Pupils, Greece.

Structure: Bilingual special school

The school looks back on 40 years of history, including one and a half decades of bilingual work. It was vital during the school's foundation that the current head teacher of senior classes and his wife, who was the first deaf pedagogue at the school, collected input from international research, which they passed on to their colleagues.

Deaf and hearing teachers have equal qualifications. Great emphasis is placed on good competencies in Greek Sign Language (ENT) and Greek.

Practice: Multilingual and cooperative

All pupils, who arrive at the Gymnasium's lower secondary school from a cooperating primary school, have age-appropriate sign language levels because the primary school (and early intervention before that) also has a bimodal bilingual programme in place. The primary school's headmistress has a PhD in psycholinguistics and cooperates closely with the staff. The school does not urge pupils to use any particular language.

Team teaching is the exception rather than the rule. A "clear separation" of the languages is encouraged, but some teachers sign and speak at the same time, depending on the situation and the school subject.

In general, the school has open classes, which means that there is active exchange with other schools in which various classes visit each other. Greek spoken and written language and ENT are present throughout school life. All teachers are proficient in both languages and all pupils use both languages. The bilingual model in Athens also offers speech therapy, which is well accepted.

ENT is embedded in the curriculum with four lessons per week. The subject is taught by native signers and includes history, culture, identity, and practical life. In theatre classes - a very central aspect of the school - Ancient Greek is important. English is a compulsory subject and International Sign and ASL are offered as further foreign languages, which are not embedded in the curriculum. Additionally, the school has a media laboratory headed by a deaf teacher.

School Community Pfeilgasse, Austria

Structure: Inclusive – bimodal bilingual – multilevel

The primary school (VS) and the new middle school (NMS) Pfeilgasse accommodate three inclusive, bimodal bilingual, multilevel classes from the Federal Institute for Deaf Education in Vienna. The project has been well documented (Kramreiter, 2015; 2016) and was born as a common initiative carried by parents and teachers. This close cooperation with the parents has remained intact, as parents are consistently included in new developments. Due to budgetary restraints, however, no Austrian Sign Language (ÖGS) courses are offered to them.

It has been difficult to find pedagogical staff with all necessary competencies because there is no training in Austria for a bilingual, inclusive, multilevel teaching model. Not all hearing mainstream schoolteachers are proficient in ÖGS, and the only possibility they have to develop their ÖGS skills is in their free time.

Since non-ÖGS-proficient mainstream schoolteachers teach in teams together with sign language pedagogues, interpreters play an important role in discussions, team meetings, etc. A stopgap solution used is lay interpreting by colleagues with sign language skills, which is regarded as unsatisfactory.

The Law on Compulsory Education and the School Organisation Law⁵⁵ regulate the integration of children with disabilities at schools. DHH pupils may be taught according to the mainstream curriculum or to the curriculum of the special school for deaf pupils. The current curricula do not allow for ÖGS as a compulsory subject.

Practice: Open classes

Pupils are organised in multilevel groups⁵⁶, and due to the specific composition of the body of pupils, there are more than 15 different first languages in three classes at the moment. Classes are taught in German and ÖGS. The project is bilingual with German and ÖGS. Each lesson is taught by an ÖGS proficient teacher together with a mainstream schoolteacher. Children decide spontaneously for themselves which tasks (e.g. presenta-

55 See www.cisonline.at/gesetzliche-grundlagen (in German) (Accessed on 10 November 2017).

56 In the school year 2016-2017, there were 3 groups consisting of 15 DHH and 60 hearing pupils between the ages of 6 and 15. Group I consists of pre-school and 3 grades of elementary school, group II consists of pupils in grades 4 to 6, and group III of grades 7 and 8.

tion) they want to complete in German or in ÖGS. During breaks and in informal settings, ÖGS is continuously present because there are always deaf teachers or hearing teachers with sign language proficiency present and almost one third of the pupils use sign language.

The three multilevel classes are taught in an open manner, which means that there is very little teacher-centred teaching. The teachers feel that this saves them personal resources. Pupils are given monthly plans that they work on independently, supported by two teachers. Six lessons, in which main subjects are taught, include the presence of AHS⁵⁷ teachers (a concept of new secondary education), which means that in these cases pupils are supported by three teachers.

Additional support classes for DHH pupils take place after school.

German is a regular compulsory subject for everyone. The curriculum for special schools provides for only one lesson per week of a “non-compulsory exercise” in ÖGS for DHH pupils. No grades are given. In addition, all pupils have half a lesson of ÖGS per week, which is taught within the framework of “Social Learning”. Deaf history, deaf studies, identity work, etc. are not present in the timetable. The “identity” topic is covered informally by the presence of several deaf teachers and older DHH pupils, who serve as role models.

English is taught as a foreign language. Those pupils who can perceive acoustically with technical aids and want to learn English pronunciation also receive education in spoken English. ASL is only offered additionally and for support during the four years of primary school (by a deaf teacher who acquired ASL on her own initiative). There is no ASL teaching staff for the higher levels, which is why English is taught without connection to either of the two sign languages.

École Jean Jaurès, France

Structure: Bilingual classes in a mainstream school initiated by parents

Thirty years ago, a group of parents together with an interpreter initiated the first bimodal bilingual education programme at a mainstream school in Toulouse. Regarding preschool, there is an integrative bilingual kindergarten preparing the pupils linguistically. Hearing and deaf pupils are taught in the same primary school, however, in separate classrooms.

57 AHS – Austrian abbreviation for Higher School of General Education, a higher secondary school at the end of which the pupils take a school-leaving examination.

Hearing teachers must be proficient in sign language in order to teach DHH children. They study French Sign Language (LSF) in courses outside of the school and ideally they reach Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level C1.

The timetable in École Jean Jaurès follows the national educational programme and comprises the same compulsory educational goals for DHH and hearing pupils. An important legal foundation was laid in 2005, when parents received the legal right to choose between a monolingual/oral and a bilingual education form with LSF.⁵⁸ However, this law does not guarantee the bilingual school's continued existence.

Practice: French sign language as a basis

In all primary school classes with DHH pupils, deaf pedagogues and assistants are part of the team. At secondary level, pupils are taught by deaf teachers or hearing teachers, sometimes with the support of sign language interpreters. In bilingual classes, written and sign languages are present all day. Content subjects focus on information transmission and not so much on French language practice. Teaching aids (material) for French classes, in particular for written language, have been adapted by the teachers.

3.2 Results of the Comparative Analysis

Our description of the different good practice examples shows that schools have found different ways to successfully implement bimodal bilingual educational programmes. This comparative analysis has allowed us to deduct general findings for bimodal bilingual education:

3.2.1 Findings on structure

1. Bimodal bilingual education is implemented successfully not only at special schools. Different solutions for *bimodal bilingual education* have been introduced *at inclusive mainstream schools* with varying success, and it seems that close, legally binding cooperation between mainstream and specials schools works especially well.
2. During the *development phase*, hearing and deaf teachers and pedagogues, interpreters and linguists often work together in an interdisciplinary manner, sometimes without special training.
3. For the establishment phase, *relevant qualification of the entire pedagogical staff* is seen as a decisive factor. High qualification does not only mean sign language skills, but also specialised competencies

58 For details on French laws and curricula for bimodal bilingual education, see www.univie.ac.at/map-designbilingual/laws (Accessed on 10 November 2017).

in DHH education. Focussing on qualified staff proficient in sign language as well as sign language didactics or even bilingual didactics is a precondition for the bimodal bilingual profile to work. When bimodal bilingual concepts have been in place for a longer period, national spoken and sign languages become equal working languages in lessons and among the staff. An interim solution may be the use of interpreters in class. However, all schools aim at offering classes without interpreters or where interpreters serve only as assistants. The entire staff should be proficient in sign language, including other specialised personnel (e.g. psychologists, after-school carers) as well as non-pedagogical staff (e.g. staff helping with homework, kitchen personnel). Where possible, language competencies and specialised training are employment criteria, and if necessary, staff members with insufficient qualification receive further training by the schools.

4. *Teacher training on bimodal bilingual content* stabilises bimodal bilingual education, however, this is not available everywhere yet.
5. Particularly at locations that are not well established yet, there is a need for *further training* of the staff, especially regarding language education. Often, there are no suitable internal or external training options available.
6. *Deaf and hearing colleagues* work together on equal terms. At all locations, deaf colleagues have been involved in the process from the very beginning, and today they constitute a substantial part of the staff. They are regarded as important role models for pupils and they are responsible for sign language classes and for the development and assessment of the pupils' sign language skills. They also change the communication culture among the staff. Access to *interpreters* is seen as important. Consequently, many locations have permanently employed in-house interpreters and some schools organise budgets for external interpreters.
7. All locations described above were mainly *initiated by parents*. However, at some locations cooperation with parents is being experienced as limited and declining at the moment. There is a wish for more support from the parents in sustaining the schools.
8. *Strong, committed school management* is decisive for setting up and sustaining bimodal bilingual programmes.
9. If *school authorities and politicians* do not support bimodal bilingual education on principle, schools fear for their existence. Conversely, a school's survival is not guaranteed until there is support from education authorities and politicians.
10. The existence of legal foundations entails further developments and a feeling of security. A lack of curricula or laws on bilingual education leads to existential fears. *Legal foundations* are therefore an indispensable precondition for a sustainable establishment of bimodal bilingual schools.

3.2.2 Findings on practice

1. Bilingual education starts early (before primary school) and is thus guaranteed over the *entire school career*. Ideally, everything from kindergarten/ day care to secondary education is united under one roof in close cooperation with the respective institutions.
2. The *body of pupils is heterogeneous* with regard to language, cognition, and multiple disabilities. Linguistic heterogeneity leads to individualised approaches in linguistic education, with the children's preferences being accepted. When putting together classes, however, heterogeneity is seen as a challenge, especially in smaller schools. Many locations feel a need for further development, in particular with regard to more individualised didactics.
3. The *national sign language is offered as a subject*. Sign languages are usually taught for at least two lessons per week at all levels, but they are also integrally developed as a part of other subjects. In addition, the development of spoken and written languages is an important aspect, which entails that all languages are equally considered in education.
4. The national sign language is also offered to hearing children in order to guarantee that *everybody can communicate with each other*. Most locations use spoken language plus the national sign language and SSS.
5. *Identity work/DHH studies* are often integrated into the subject of sign language and/or into other subjects, or they are implicitly conveyed through a school's culture and consciously structured day-to-day life.
6. Well-established schools have a media office or a studio for creating bimodal bilingual *teaching materials*, in particular for the subject of sign language. For other subjects, existing materials are used, which are sometimes adapted.
7. *Diagnostic instruments* for sign language are not available anywhere. Observation methods are used more or less systematically. Some well-established locations have developed their own examination tools.

3.2.3 Findings on school culture

1. *Respect for both languages* is given at all locations. Sign and spoken/written languages are on equal terms in day-to-day school life.
2. School staff *does not doubt* (anymore) that bimodal bilingual education is purposeful.
3. *Networks* with various organisations such as Deaf, Hard of Hearing and parent associations have been built.
4. *Exchange with other bilingual locations* within the country and in other countries provides valuable information for building and developing one's own practice.
5. *Cooperation with researchers* and universities is appreciated. However, there is a wish for more active exchange of research results.

4 Conclusion: Design Your Own Way

Our analysis of eight different locations shows that bimodal bilingual education can be implemented in various ways. The motto for the development of school and teaching programmes should therefore be: “Design Your Own Way”. Didactics for bimodal bilingual classes should not favour *one single* concept, but should provide tools to help school managements and teachers to develop their own models tailored to their resources, pupils, families, and teachers, and to again and again critically assess and development these models.

Based on the findings from our good practice analysis and on the wealth of experience from teachers and researchers, we have developed tools and materials to support head teachers and other teachers who wish to implement and advance bimodal bilingual education at their institution. These include, for example, our *Bi-Bi Toolbox*, a comprehensive index card system available in German, English, Slovakian and partially in various sign languages (videos), which can be downloaded for free at: www.univie.ac.at/teach-designbilingual/index.php?id=28.

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3. Good practice examples at European and national levels

a) Europe

ii. Non-formal Education and Deaf Youth in Europe - A Good Practice Example by EUDY

Timothy Rowies (Former President, European Union of the Deaf Youth)

1 Introduction

Since 1987, the European Union of the Deaf Youth (EUDY) has been working towards securing a better position for Deaf young people⁵⁹ in the member states of the Council of Europe and Kosovo (since 2012)⁶⁰. This has been translated into a concrete vision of a Europe where all young Deaf people are able to come together and share their experiences across cultures and boundaries, discovering ways to realise their rights on an equal basis with others. Here, equality means full social and political participation empowered by non-formal training and cross-cultural youth exchange, including access to education and employment.

EUDY has been working towards five main aims, as outlined in its statutes:

- To foster the personal development of young Deaf persons, including the strengthening of their identity, their sign language, and cultural heritage;
- To empower young Deaf persons to become citizens in their own right by ensuring full and equal access to all information and communication through sign language;
- To promote the rights and access to education, employment and other areas of life, for any young Deaf person from urban and rural areas, including less developed ones, in Europe;
- To encourage political and social participation in society from an early age;
- To further mutual understanding among Deaf youth across cultures, countries and regions at all levels to facilitate the exchange of ideas, skills and experiences.

59 As stated in EUDY Statutes, the term “Deaf young person” shall include children and refer to any person who is 30 years of age or younger. The term “Deaf” refers to any person with a hearing loss, in particular those who use a national sign language as their native or preferred language.

60 EUDY’s General Assembly in Sarajevo officially adopted EUDY’s position paper on Kosovo, allowing them become a Full Member of EUDY. See EUDY Position Paper on Kosovo.

To achieve these five aims, EUDY works with 29 Member Organisations from 28 European countries.⁶¹ Annually, the Member Organisations meet at the General Assembly, but other activities organised by EUDY — such as camps, trainings, seminars, and study sessions — also offer national representatives opportunities to discuss current matters directly with each other in International Sign, without an intermediary, such as a sign language interpreter.

EUDY is also lobbying to ensure that the voice of Deaf youth is heard in the EU institutions. In order to be involved in the decision-making process, EUDY cooperates with the European Union of the Deaf, the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, and the European Youth Forum. With our aims in mind, this has been translated into active work in the areas of political participation, education, youth employment, social inclusion, and social engagement.

2 Impacts of non-formal learning

Non-formal education refers to planned structured programmes and processes of personal and social education designed to improve a range of skills and competences, which lie outside the scope of formal educational curricula. Non-formal education is what happens in places such as youth organisations, sports and drama clubs, and Deaf community groups where Deaf young people meet, for example, to undertake projects, play games, discuss different topics, or go camping. Non-formal education achievements are usually difficult to certify, even if their social recognition is increasing. It worth noting that only 20% of learning throughout life happens in the formal education system (Cross, 2007).

In recent years, youth organisations, as the main providers of non-formal education, have assumed the responsibility of trying to position non-formal education on the same level as formal education within the education debate. Better recognition of non-formal education will prove to be beneficial for the individual learner taking part in non-formal education: through self-recognition, the learners will be able to make more informed life choices and their learning will be given the weight it deserves, with regards to the available opportunities in formal education or employment (European Youth Forum, 2013a, 2013b; Hooegeveen, 2015; European Union of the Deaf Youth, 2016a).

61 Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Non-formal education in youth organisations takes place in the specific environment of youth work (Council of Europe, 2017), and has evolved into a specific and successful type of education with the following characteristics (European Youth Forum, 2011):

- Voluntary: learners participate in non-formal educational activities of their own volition;
- Intentional: activities are designed by non-formal education providers to reach set objectives;
- Participative: young people participate actively in the design and implementation of the learning programmes;
- Conscious: the learners are aware that they are learning;
- Process-oriented: the learning process is of great importance, as it allows the learner to choose what s/he wants to learn and achieve.

3 Non-formal and human rights education activities

Non-formal education can play an important role in teaching young persons about human rights, including young Deaf persons. Indeed, EUDY's activities in past years have showcased that developing new activities utilising non-formal educational methods is more effective than simply adapting existing activities to young Deaf persons. Our activities provide general tools to Deaf young people, equipping them to address human rights issues. An important consideration in our activities is facing the reality that we live in a world where many issues, such as politics, economics, religion, environment, and culture are controversial or divisive. When addressing rights related to controversial or provocative issues, it is important to ensure that Deaf young participants feel secure and that they do not feel embarrassed or forced to reveal more than they wish to about themselves or their beliefs. Encouraging young people to think for themselves, to take responsibility and to be effective multipliers is an important aim of our activities related to youth participation, individually as well as organisationally.

The role of young people, youth organisations, and youth policy in promoting the right to human rights education is also clearly spelled out in the priorities for the youth policy of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2008). Human rights education has a very clear purpose: to enable learning about, for, and through human rights. Although knowledge and competences regarding human rights are a full part of human rights education, the learner, or the participant, is at its centre. We are calling this non-formal learning method the learner-centred method. What matters in the learner-centred method is not so much what the facilitator or teacher delivers or conveys, or even the contents of the lesson. It is the learner/participant who is at the centre because what they learn or make out of what is taught or experienced is what really matters, as in this way it is

simply more relevant for the participant and therefore it is more likely to be given a practical meaning. To reach as many Deaf young people as possible, we have officially set up the first training programme of trainers in human rights education for Deaf young people.⁶² The objective of this programme is to train young Deaf persons from 14 countries⁶³ to become trainers⁶⁴ and spread human rights knowledge in their countries using their national sign languages.

4 Practices and tools from youth organisations

On a European level and addressing European-wide themes, EUDY provides non-formal education by offering trainings, study sessions, seminars, summer school, youth exchanges, and more. The primary mode of communication used during these events is International Sign, which is by no means a substitution for a national sign language (European Union of the Deaf, 2012; European Union of the Deaf Youth, 2015), but rather a mode of communication enabling exchange between speakers of different national sign languages. EUDY continues to raise awareness amongst its national member organisations to provide more non-formal educational activities or training sessions for Deaf young people in their countries.

Young people participating in our trainings and study sessions are mostly youth workers, community leaders, activists, educators, and active volunteers from different member states of the Council of Europe, with diverse background in terms of experience and profiles with regards to the training that is provided. Not only are we focusing on battling youth discrimination, marginalisation and furthering equality through all our work, we also choose an annual theme focussing on a particular kind of discrimination or issue. Additionally, we cooperate with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, who support our study sessions to identify and analyse the current situation of discrimination and human rights in the everyday lives of Deaf youth in Europe. For instance, in 2013 we organised a training entitled “Deaf Youth and Politics: Human Rights, Empowerment and Active Citizenship”⁶⁵, aimed at shaping Deaf youth to become more active and well-rounded citizens in their own right. In

62 See EUDY Calls for participants to become a human rights trainer: <https://vimeo.com/221587757> (Group 1) and <https://vimeo.com/227098279> (Group 2) (Accessed on 09 November 2017).

63 Group 1: Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and United Kingdom. Group 2: Bosnia & Herzegovina, Georgia, Norway, Portugal, Romania and Spain.

64 See EUDY Training of Trainers in Human Rights video reports: <https://vimeo.com/232986175> (Accessed on 09 November 2017).

65 See EUDY Study Session 2013 “Deaf Youth and Politics: Human Rights, Empowerment and Active Citizenship” website: <http://eudystudysession.wixsite.com/2013> (Accessed on 9 November 2017).

2014, we focused on the topic “Deaf in Education: Looking at the present, working for the future”⁶⁶, with the aim of developing tools that will enable Deaf students to ensure better education for other Deaf people in Europe and therefore to gain a better position in the (hearing) community. In 2015, we worked on the topic of employment, in the framework of our training entitled “Being unemployed in Europe: Battling discrimination and under-education in Deaf youth unemployment”.⁶⁷ The objective of this training was to battle deaf youth unemployment by developing skills and tools and enforcing a better transition from education to the labour market. In 2016, we organised a training entitled “Excluded from the excluded: understanding and recognising minorities in the deaf community”⁶⁸, aiming at reducing the marginalisation of minority groups such as Deafblind persons, Deaf LGBTQIA+, and other Deaf persons experiencing discrimination on the basis of their gender, race, multiple disabilities, mental health issues, and more, by recognising intersectional discrimination and developing tools to strengthen the Deaf community as a diverse group. In 2017, we are focussing on the topic of the mobility of young Deaf people, which we try to improve by increasing awareness and promoting constructive dialogue among researchers, policy-makers and practitioners on this topic. For example, we recently published our magazine OFC! entitled “Equal mobility for us, please”⁶⁹ exploring opportunities and obstacles regarding the mobility of young Deaf people in Europe.

Youth trainings are based on values such as volunteerism, autonomy, independence, participation, solidarity, and inclusiveness. One specific training is aimed both at ensuring the development and the sustainability of youth organisations and at providing young people with the space to develop their attitudes, using knowledge, skills, competencies other than those developed in the framework of formal education. These skills, referred to as “soft skills”, include a wide range of competencies such as interpersonal, team, organisational and conflict management, intercultural awareness, leadership, planning, organising, coordination and practical problem-solving skills, teamwork, self-confidence, discipline and

66 See EUDY Study Session 2014 “Deaf in Education: Looking at the present, working for the future” website: <http://eudystudysession2014.wixsite.com/home> (Accessed on 09 November 2017).

67 See EUDY Study Session 2015 “Being unemployed in Europe: Battling discrimination and under-education in deaf youth unemployment” website: <http://studysession2015.wixsite.com/studysession15> (Accessed on 09 November 2017).

68 See EUDY Study Session 2016 “Excluded from the excluded: understanding and recognising minorities in the deaf community” daily video reports: <https://vimeo.com/187789107> (Accessed on 09 November 2017).

69 OFC! is the annual magazine of the European Union of the Deaf Youth, created by Deaf youth for Deaf youth. Linked to EUDY’s annual theme, our second magazine in 2016 addressed the topic of diversity and our third magazine in 2017 was about mobility. See EUDY magazine OFC! n°2 and n°3.

responsibility (Souto-Otero et al., 2012). The methods used in non-formal education are very diverse and are mainly based on creating healthy environments of trust where participants can share experiences. The majority of our activities use a learning cycle of work in small groups to experience the activity itself and whole-group work in the reflecting phase in which participants debrief each other and evaluate the activity (Council of Europe, 2015). Small-group work encourages learners to participate and helps develop cooperative teamwork. The size of a small group depends on practical aspects such as the total number of participants and how much space there is. An activity can last for 15 minutes, an hour or a day, depending on the activity in question. These activities can involve, for example, brainstorming using wall writing and games, discussions in large or small groups such as debates and case studies, drama such as role-playing and forum theatre, and (audio)visual methods such as pictures and media. The activities are run and facilitated by Deaf (young) trainers themselves in various roles: as facilitators, as trainers, or as experts on a topic. The phase of reflection provides the keys for learning and helps the learners to put what they have learned into a wider context. The participants are asked questions during the debriefing and the evaluation process regarding what happened during their activity and how they felt, what they learned about themselves, what they learned about the issues addressed in the activity and related human rights, and how they can move forward and use what they have learned.

Although being empowered to become an active citizen or even a trainer is the biggest impact for the Deaf participants, receiving training in sign language has an important impact, too, as many participants did not grow up in an education system that teaches in sign language. Too many Deaf young persons in Europe are receiving education through a sign language interpreter or without any interpretation at all. They are struggling to learn in a language that is not fully accessible to them (Kalinova & Rowies, 2017). Through these non-formal education possibilities provided by Deaf young trainers themselves, the Deaf young participants are able to fully access the mode of communication and to exchange information and learn in an international context. This is especially important, as formal learning and information resources are often not accessible for Deaf learners (European Union of the Deaf Youth, 2016b).

There are many interesting learning outcomes that stem from EUDY trainings: for example, at the beginning of a human rights training during the study session⁷⁰ that we organised at the European Youth Centre Budapest in 2016, participants could hardly define human rights or tell

70 See EUDY Study Session 2016 “Excluded from the excluded: understanding and recognising minorities in the deaf community” Daily video reports: <https://vimeo.com/187789107> (Accessed on 9 November 2017).

us about the main human rights treaties and conventions. At the end of the training, however, they said that the concept of human rights was so obvious to them now, that it felt strange that they had not been able to say anything about the topic at the beginning of the training. After the end of the training, most participants expressed an interest in delving deeper into the topics that they learned. Some were even interested in organising a workshop or a training activity for local, national, or even international young Deaf people on one or several of these topics, such as what human rights mean and how Deaf young persons can use various human rights tools to advocate for improving their own lives, like appealing to treaties in advocacy strategies to demand better standards of life. In 2016, we built our own Pool of Trainers⁷¹ comprising a group of Deaf youth trainers⁷² gathered for the implementation of non-formal education and youth work values, aims and practices of EUDY.

5 Conclusion

While it is important to pay attention to the conditions necessary to create an inclusive environment for every young person (European Youth Forum, 2016a, 2016b) within the formal education system, including tertiary education, the cornerstone for EUDY policy is our focus on how young people can become active citizens and positive contributors to society. This implies a much wider perspective, and an emphasis on non-formal education outside the formal school system. In Deaf youth work that is based on values such as volunteerism, openness, and non-formal education within the Deaf community and its cultural and linguistic identity, motivation is a key factor. Deaf youth initiatives, Deaf youth clubs and non-governmental Deaf youth organisations, which are actively involving young people at all levels and where young people themselves determine their activities, play a central role in developing young people as active citizens to create an inclusive society.

EUDY strongly believes in and underlines the importance of viewing Deaf young people as a vital resource, and not as a problem that needs solving. A problem-oriented approach to youth policy is by nature captured in a short-term and ad-hoc perspective, because it will focus on trying to “extinguish fires” and solve problems whenever and wherever they appear. On the contrary, perceiving young people as a resource focuses on developing long-term solutions, identifying needs, and developing

71 According to the Council of Europe’s 2016 publication “Pool of Trainers. Role and Functioning of the Pool”, see: https://trainers-youthapplications.coe.int/content/download/186866/1879187/file/Role_and_functioning_of_the_Trainers_poolREV.pdf (Accessed on 09 November 2017).

72 See EUDY Call for Pool of Trainers: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4EDeDAXV0JESW9rQ09DUWs4VmZqT3ZIT2J3RndPeTh2bXc0/view> (Accessed on 09 November 2017).

policies to allow young people to realise their full potential as citizens while simultaneously enriching society to benefit from the intellectual capital of young people (European Youth Forum & Lauritzen, 2007; European Youth Forum, 2016c). Indeed, Deaf youth are experts on their own education, as they are the ones who have either experienced it very recently or are still enrolled in education. Together with the European Youth Forum, EUDY is working to strengthen the role of young people and youth organisations as important actors in the creation of an inclusive generation through practices such as non-formal education and the creation of secure sign language environments. By inclusive generation, we mean youth working for a fully inclusive society, in which sign language users and Deaf people have an equal status and are recognised as full citizens in their own right. Sign language, Deaf culture, and the Deaf community should be fully accepted as being part of our rich European heritage. EUDY is the primary organisation providing non-formal education for Deaf learners at a European level, with significant experience and knowledge in formal and non-formal education. We therefore hope that other organisations, including human rights defenders, National Associations of the Deaf and other stakeholders, will consider us as a resource and include the voice of Deaf youth in their policies and lobbying. Only when including the perspectives of all citizens, including young Deaf persons, from the conception of policies to their implementation, can it be ensured that their perspective is properly represented.

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Biography

Timothy Rowies is a Belgian young Deaf leader, active in many fields, such as youth and students' rights, deaf community, minorities, inclusive generation and equal opportunities in Europe and beyond. He was President of the European Union of the Deaf Youth (EUDY) between 2014 and 2017 and is the Founder of the European Deaf Students' Union (EDSU). He also co-founded and is a member of EUDY's Pool of Trainers. He previously majored in "Human Rights Education" at the Council of Europe and "Engineering of Education in Sign Language" at the University of Toulouse III – Paul Sabatier. Currently, he is a member of the Expert Group on Membership, Diversity and Inclusion at the European Youth Forum.

3. Good practice examples at European and national levels

b) Belgium

i. Creating an inclusive primary school class in Flanders, Belgium – An example of parent-led advocacy

Mark Wheatley (Executive Director, European Union of the Deaf)

1 Introduction

This chapter will describe a practice example of parent-led advocacy for the inclusion of a deaf child of deaf parents into a mainstream primary school in Flanders, Belgium, with accessibility being provided through sign language interpretation.

First, some background information will be provided with regards to Basil Wheatley, the child in question, as well as the education system in Flanders, both in general and specifically with regards to Flemish legislation regarding sign language interpreters in school settings. Then, the two existing primary school options for children with disabilities in Flanders will be presented. Furthermore, the impact of these options on the increase of inclusive education in Flanders will be elaborated on. In addition, sign language acquisition mechanisms of deaf children will be described. Then, the focus will shift to the good practice example, describing the reasonable accommodation system at Basil Wheatley's school as well as the petition that his parents filed to ensure his access to sign language interpretation in school. Finally, new projects to improve the inclusivity of the school environment for Basil will be presented.

2 Background

2.1 Basil Wheatley

Basil Wheatley has been deaf since his birth. He is eight years old and has had normal cognitive development to date. Both his parents, Kathleen Vercruysse and Mark Wheatley, are deaf. Flemish Sign Language (VGT) and British Sign Language (BSL) are the home languages (and mother tongues) of Basil. He is one of the 10% of the deaf children who naturally become fluent in sign language, as a result of being surrounded and exposed to it on a regular and frequent basis through his parents (Kushalnagar et al., 2010). The languages that a child acquires during early childhood are called first languages. Around five years of age, the plasticity of the brain, which allows children to acquire languages more easily, begins to gradually decrease. A child who has not acquired a first language by that

time (which is often called “the critical period”) is at risk of not acquiring native fluency in any language (Lenneberg, 1967; Krashen, 1973; Pakaluk & Neville, 2010). Basil does not have this issue.

In his early childhood (from September 2010 to March 2012, at the age of one), Basil attended a nursery school in Blydhoove, Belgium. This nursery school has 85 places, seven of which are reserved for children with special needs. Four of the supervisors employed by this nursery school had already received training in VGT. Both hearing and deaf children are enrolled there; therefore, the staff has experience in the care of deaf babies and toddlers.

2.2 Education system in Flanders

Flanders is one of the three federal regions of Belgium (the Flemish Region, the Brussels-Capital Region and the Walloon Region). Additionally, the Federal State has three linguistic communities, which are called the Flemish, French and German-speaking communities. The Flemish community exercises its political powers in Flanders and in Brussels, the French community in the Walloon region (except in German-speaking communities) and in Brussels, the German-speaking community in the communities of the province of Liège, which forms the German language area. As the communities are based on the concept of “language”, they have political competencies in related policy areas, including the area of education. However, these separate education systems in Belgium run along very similar lines within each of the communities.

2.2.1 Flemish legislation concerning sign language interpreters in school settings

In 1994, the Flemish Government adopted a decree, which establishes rules with regards to the responsibility of the Flemish Fund for Social Integration for Persons with Disabilities (Vlaams Fonds voor Sociale Integratie van Personen met een Handicap) for the cost of support for interpreters for deaf people.⁷³ But it took until 1998 for the Department of Education to agree and approve funding for 3,380 interpreting hours in educational settings, but limited to 12 hours per week per student. These are provided by CAB (Flemish Communication Assistance Agency for the Deaf). However, at that time, during the negotiation with the Ministry of Education, Fevlado⁷⁴, the Flemish Federation of Deaf Organisations, insisted that the

73 Decree of the Flemish Government 20 July 1994 laying down the rules to be followed by the Vlaams Fonds voor Sociale Integratie van Personen met een Handicap regarding its responsibility for the cost of support for interpreters for deaf people, *B.S.* 22 October 1994.

74 During October 2017, Fevlado changed its name to Doof Vlanderen.

funds should be applied to secondary or higher education, not primary education (Heyerick & Vermeerbergen, 2012). The reasoning behind this decision was that Fevlado preferred all deaf children to be educated in a deaf primary school before being mainstreamed in secondary schools, so that the students can acquire knowledge about both deaf and hearing worlds (Heyerick & Vermeerbergen, 2012).

VGT was recognised as the language of the Flemish Deaf Community by a decree adopted by the Flemish Parliament in April 2006 and published in the Bulletin of Acts (“Staatsblad”) in May of the same year⁷⁵ (Wheatley & Pabsch, 2012). It was slightly amended in 2014.⁷⁶ VGT had already been added to the official curriculum of deaf education in 2003, but only as an optional subject. However, it was used officially as a language in providing bilingual education in only one specialised deaf school. Other specialised deaf schools still used an oral educational approach, but were decreasing in number due to mainstreaming. In most specialist deaf schools, VGT was taught by deaf assistants or broken down as ‘sign-supported Dutch’. However, despite the recognition of VGT, most deaf children are now mainstreamed without sign language interpreter or note taker (De Raeve & Lichtert, 2010; Vermeerbergen et al., 2012).

2.2.2 Primary education system in Flanders

The existing Flemish primary educational settings for deaf children are twofold, special and mainstream education.

The special primary education system in Flanders is divided into nine types.⁷⁷ Each type is adapted to the needs of children due to a specific disability. Generally, deaf children are classified as Type 7, which is aimed at addressing the educational needs of children and young people with auditory disabilities (Vermeerbergen & Van Herreweghe, 2008; Lichtert, 2008).

Most Flemish deaf schools are part of a larger consortium that includes a Medical Educational Institute (MPI), a rehabilitation centre, and a home counselling service that supports the acquisition of the educational curriculum taught in the schools.

75 See http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=nl&la=N&cn=2006050537&table_name=wet (Accessed on 26 October 2017).

76 See http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi/article_body.pl?language=nl&caller=summary&pub_date=14-06-13&numac=20142025 (Accessed on 7 November 2017).

77 See <https://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/onderwijsaanbod/default.aspx/bao/buo> (Accessed on 17 October 2017).

On the other hand, an increasing number of parents choose to enrol their deaf children in “mainstream” primary education. This takes place under the framework of the Decree of 21 March 2014 regarding measures for pupils with specific educational needs⁷⁸, which establishes a partnership between mainstream and special education institutions.

This decree stipulates how Flemish schools must act with regards to students with disabilities who are unable follow the classes in a regular school due to their disability. The objective is to enable more students to enrol in ordinary schools, thus referring fewer students to special schools. The decree also obliges the school to liaise with relevant groups such as the CLB⁷⁹ (Centra voor leerlingenbegeleiding – Student counselling centre) and also supports teachers from specialist schools who will go to ordinary schools in order to assist deaf pupils.

2.2.3 Inclusive education in Flanders

Nowadays, most deaf children in Flanders do not go to a deaf school anymore, but follow classes in mainstream schools, as the majority of deaf children are from hearing families and many either have a cochlear implant (CI) or wear digital hearing aids. Therefore, they have a ‘hearing mind-set’ and many parents prefer for them to be in an oral rather than a signing school environment. Since the mid-1980s, deaf students in Flanders have had the option to be enrolled in mainstream education. This is to ensure inclusive education for deaf children through collaboration between regular education and special education systems. It is intended to allow deaf pupils to attend classes and activities in a mainstream school with sign language interpreters and to benefit from additional guidance provided by a support teacher from specialist Type 7 schools.

The responsibility of the specialist teacher is to support the deaf pupil, but s/he also has several other tasks, such as providing the necessary information to the mainstream education teacher, such as how to work with sign language interpreters.

The Department of Education, the Flemish Agency for Persons with Disabilities, and the Equal Opportunities in Flanders state that the “education policy proposes and makes it clear that inclusion is the first option for all learners. Therefore, it is a fundamental task for the whole education system in general and for each school in particular to offer an appropriate framework for each learner to ensure optimal personal and

78 See http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi/article_body.pl?language=nl&caller=summary&pub_date=14-08-28&numac=2014035613 (Accessed on 7 November 2017).

79 For more information, see <http://www.onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/centra-voor-leerlingenbegeleiding> (Accessed on 26 October 2017).

social development.”⁸⁰ (Departement onderwijs, Vlaams Fonds & Gelijke Kansen in Vlaanderen, 2004).

This shift towards inclusive education has led to the fact that today, it is mostly children with multiple disabilities (e.g. deafness combined with mental disabilities and/or autism) who attend special schools. Therefore, special secondary education has become less and less attractive for regular deaf pupils, particularly because these schools do not follow the national curriculum, which is a vital educational pathway to secondary and higher education. Generally, the programme of these schools tends to be more specific with regards to the disability of the enrolled learners. There, a deaf child could still be in the minority compared to other deaf children with additional disability and receive the same limited educational programme. In addition, there generally is a stigma with regards to attending special schools with other disabled pupils (Casaer, 2008). For these reasons, many parents of deaf children only consider a deaf school as a last resort, after every other schooling attempt has failed, which results in a further decline in the population of deaf learners in Type 7 special education schools and subsequently reduces the number of such schools.

This issue was also highlighted in the Belgian UNCRPD shadow report (2011) compiled by Gelijke Rechten voor Iedere Persoon met een handicap (GRIP), a human rights organisation focusing on the rights of persons with disabilities, in cooperation with the project group shadow report. Concretely, the report pointed out that “deaf pupils who want to obtain a full diploma have no other choice than to integrate in the regular education system. However, they will not receive sufficient support in that system, which means that they are denied the right to an environment that maximizes academic and social development. The ‘reasonable accommodations’ in Flanders, amongst others by means of hours of interpretation, are not at all sufficient. Deaf pupils are only allowed a VGT (Flemish Sign Language) interpreter for 1/3 of their school trajectory. No interpreter is available for social interaction, for instance during the lunch break.”

Smessaert (2009) also addresses the issue of schools for the deaf being unable to issue diplomas and the impact it has on the increased mainstreaming of deaf pupils. She highlights that despite that, no research has been undertaken with regards to the pupils’ experiences, although for them, the differences between enrolling in a school for the deaf or a “hearing” school are significant. She also points out that the Flemish

80 Translated from Dutch: “Het onderwijsbeleid stelt voorop en maakt duidelijk dat inclusie de eerste optie is voor alle leerlingen. Daardoor wordt het – voor het geheel van het onderwijs en voor iedere school in het bijzonder – een fundamentele opdracht om voor elke leerling een passend kader en aanbod te realiseren voor een optimale persoonlijke en sociale ontwikkeling.”

Education inspectorate⁸¹ considers the wellbeing of pupils as an indicator of educational quality, but it has not included mainstreamed deaf pupils in its investigations.

3 Sign language acquisition of deaf children and its impact on sign language interpretation use in schools

When deaf children are enrolled in mainstream education, the aspect of accessibility of communication (both with hearing teachers and supervisors, as well as with hearing classmates) is a challenge.

Children acquire the language used in their environment at an early age. If there is adequate and accessible language input available from early on, language acquisition will take place naturally and spontaneously. Generally, children can acquire any existing natural language as an initial language in that life phase, as long as it is accessible to them. It does not matter whether the language taught is a “spoken” language or a sign language: a deaf child of deaf parents acquires sign language as naturally and, according to the same developmental patterns as a hearing child of hearing parents learns a spoken language. Therefore, in Flanders, the natural language of deaf children of deaf Flemish parents will initially be learned in the home environment, through the interaction with and between parents and family members in VGT. As Vermeerbergen et al. (2012) point out, the advantage of a special school for the deaf is that pupils have a peer group that they can relate to, as they can easily communicate in sign language.

In a mainstream school that does not employ deaf or hearing sign language using teachers and does not enrol other deaf sign language using learners, the presence of a VGT interpreter is especially important, as this professional will ensure that a deaf child of deaf parents can practice the acquired language outside the home environment. A child whose home language is not practiced, recognised and stimulated in the school environment is prevented from acquiring basic knowledge, participating in local social activities and creating meaningful social relationships with his/her peers. In addition, the presence of a VGT interpreter is also crucial for the teacher to teach and involve the deaf child in all educational activities and to follow up on his/her development.

However, it is important to point out that according to estimations, 95% of deaf children are born to hearing parents (Swanswick, 2017), who mostly do not have previous knowledge of deafness and sign language. Many of those deaf children will be exposed to a spoken language that they cannot

81 For more information, see <http://onderwijsinspectie.be> (Accessed on 31 October 2017).

hear and that they thus cannot fully understand, which can lead to severe delays in language acquisition and cognitive development. Therefore, it needs to be highlighted that for a deaf child of hearing parents who only enters in contact with sign language at school, a sign language interpreter is not a sufficient replacement for the language acquisition that usually takes place at home. A bimodal-bilingual education model— as described several times throughout this volume—where two or more speaking and signing teachers teach deaf and hearing children simultaneously in both languages, is likely to be more conclusive to closing such a child’s language acquisition gap to allow him/her to acquire a first language and to become a bilingual citizen in the long run. Furthermore, such a school also has the potential to be very beneficial for deaf children of deaf parents, as there, these children do not have to access education that is taught by a speaking teacher purely through a sign language interpreter who only transmits the information indirectly. Instead, they can be taught bilingually in both sign and written/spoken languages by signing and speaking teachers.

4 Sint-Leo Hemelsdaele⁸² School’s previous system of reasonable accommodation

At the age of two and a half years, Basil was enrolled in the kindergarten of the Vrije Basisschool Hemelsdaele (before its merger with Sint-Leo school) for the school year 2012-2013. This was a decision by the parents who had previously visited nine different schools (both ordinary and specialised) in Flanders and Brussels.

4.1 Support system

At that time, no sign language interpretation was available for Basil, so his parents used alternative options. This involved a speech therapist, who is fluent in VGT, supporting Basil during class, but this arrangement was only possible for few hours per week. Basil’s parents additionally managed to recruit two support teachers from the Multifunctioneel Centrum Sint-Gregorius (MFC), an educational facility that provides educational, psychological, medical and paramedical support to over 400 children and young people, for a few additional hours per week. However, these support teachers were paid at the parents’ expense and they usually worked with deaf students from the secondary educational programme. Therefore, the teachers had to be creative to support Basil.

82 <http://www.slhd.be/> (Accessed on 17 November 2017).

4.2 Training of teachers to use the home sign language system

Basil's teacher, who was very aware of the problem that the lack of VGT interpretation was creating for Basil's education, took up VGT classes to communicate with him and keep him informed, but this was not sufficient. Additionally, Basil's parents recorded songs, poems, nursery rhymes, and other materials in VGT and the videos were always played during the sessions, ensuring that Basil could follow the lessons. It was a new experience for all involved, however, due to modern technology, it was easy for the parents to prepare the materials for Basil beforehand.

4.3 Support teachers

Basil's parents decided to work with pedagogical counsellors from Sint-Lievenspoort in Ghent, a centre supporting the personal development of persons who have communication limitations, including due to deafness. They involved them because of their basic knowledge of VGT and experience in supporting deaf children in mainstream settings. These persons acted as pedagogical counsellors (GON-begeleiding - Geïntegreerd onderwijs) for Basil. However, they are not sign language interpreters and they could therefore only facilitate communication using basic VGT to convey what was happening during the classes to keep Basil informed and involved. Additionally, Sint-Lievenspoort provided a qualified deaf person to be a counsellor for a weekly session with Basil, as his parents felt that it was very important for Basil to have a role model with whom he could communicate directly, rather than indirectly through sign language interpreters. The sessions involved discussions about deaf culture to assess and polish up Basil's proficiency in VGT, especially to repeat and fortify knowledge of new words he had just learned. This allowed him to go through what he had learned in school and to discuss it in-depth. Furthermore, this deaf counsellor gave Basil the opportunity to express his feelings in one-on-one sessions rather than being at risk of bottling them up in a predominantly hearing environment in school. Overall, the school management team tried their best to ensure the education of Basil using the limited resources they had, but it became apparent that it could not continue in this way.

5 Petition

Due to the understanding that the existing support system in place was not sufficient to guarantee the full and equal inclusion of Basil, the director of the school applied to the Special Educational Learning Resources of the Flemish Educational Agency to obtain sign language interpreting support for Basil during his first school year. Sign language interpreting support was requested for 20 hours a week, totalling 760 hours a year.

However, this application was rejected based on the argument that there was no sign language interpreter support for pupils in primary and lower secondary education. The response stated that students from primary education were not part of the target group and that sign language interpreters were only awarded for students in ordinary secondary, upper, and adult education.

5.1 Legal complaint filed by the parents demanding a change of the system by lowering the age of eligibility for using sign language interpreters

After the application was rejected, Basil's parents recruited lawyers at their own expense with eventual partial financial support from Fevlado to draft and file a complaint against the Flemish Government. They stated that the refusal to award VGT interpretation to Basil is a refusal of reasonable accommodation for a disabled person violating several texts of law and the UNCRPD:

First, they argued that it is in violation of Article 15, and in conjunction with Article 19 of the Decree of 10 July 2008 providing a framework for Flemish equal opportunities and equal treatment decree.⁸³ These provisions implement Article 5 of the European Directive 2000/78 of 27 November 2000, establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

The obligation to provide “Reasonable accommodation for disabled persons” is based on Article 5 of the European Directive, which states: “In order to guarantee compliance with the principle of equal treatment in relation to persons with disabilities, reasonable accommodation shall be provided. This means that employers shall take appropriate measures, where needed in a particular case, to enable a person with a disability to have access to, participate in, or advance in employment, or to undergo training, unless such measures would impose a disproportionate burden on the employer. This burden shall not be disproportionate when it is

83 See <https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Portals/Codex/documenten/1017082.html> (Accessed on 26 October 2017).

sufficiently remedied by measures existing within the framework of the disability policy of the Member State concerned.”⁸⁴

Implemented into Belgian law, this content is reflected in Article 15 stating that the refusal to provide reasonable accommodation for a disabled person constitutes discrimination.⁸⁵ Furthermore, Article 19 stipulates that it can be considered a denial of reasonable accommodation for a disabled person if it does not constitute a disproportionate burden or if the burden is sufficiently offset by existing measures. An accommodation is defined as any concrete measure, of material or intangible nature, which neutralises the restrictive influence of an insufficiently adapted environment on the participation of a disabled person.⁸⁶

Furthermore, they argued that it is in violation of Article 24, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which the Kingdom of Belgium has signed and ratified. These articles state the following:

“2. States Parties shall ensure that:

- a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
- b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
- c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual’s requirements is provided;
- d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
- e) Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

3. c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate

84 See <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32000L0078> (Accessed on 26 October 2017).

85 Translated from Dutch: „Tenzij anders is vermeld, wordt in dit decreet onder discriminatie verstaan ... het weigeren van redelijke aanpassingen voor een persoon met een handicap.“

86 Translated from Dutch: “Er is sprake van het weigeren van redelijke aanpassingen voor een persoon met een handicap als aanpassingen worden geweigerd die geen onevenredige belasting betekenen, of waarvan de belasting in voldoende mate wordt gecompenseerd door bestaande maatregelen. Als aanpassing wordt beschouwd, elke concrete maatregel, van materiële of immateriële aard, die de beperkende invloed van een onaangepaste omgeving op de participatie van een persoon met een handicap neutraliseert.”

languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.”

Finally, the complaint stated that the Flemish Government infringed on Article 91 of the Decree on Primary Education of 25 February 1997⁸⁷ which explicitly stipulates that students with special needs who are enrolled in funded or subsidised education—following a procedure laid down by the Flemish Government—can claim special educational resources.⁸⁸

5.2 Change of the law

Shortly after an out-of-court settlement on this case, the Decree on Primary Education of 25 February 1997 was amended. Until then, only students in secondary, higher, and adult education could request VGT interpreters, excluding students enrolled in primary schools. Amendment No 33⁸⁹ proposed to change this to include primary school students as also eligible for sign language interpretation. The reasoning presented in the amendment was that the original restriction had been put in place in the 1990's, at a time where it was proposed that deaf children should preferably be placed in primary special schools, which was then supported by Fevlado. Therefore, at the time, there was no need for sign language interpreters in primary school. However, the lawmakers stated that this was no longer sustainable, as the situation had changed, which made it necessary to insert a reference to the provision of VGT interpretation in primary schools in the Decree on Primary Education. The Decree on Education of 19 July 2013⁹⁰ therefore replaced the original text of Article 91 of the Decree on Primary Education of 25 February 1997, extending the allocation of sign language interpreters in educational settings to primary schools as well.⁹¹

This precedent is a landmark decision for deaf children in Flanders and beyond. By giving deaf students of all ages the right to sign language in both preschool and elementary school settings, it shows the need for early support in the school system, as advocated by the UNCRPD. Cases like

87 See <https://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/edulex/document.aspx?docid=12254> (Accessed on 26 October 2017).

88 Translated from Dutch: “§ 1. Regelmatige leerlingen met specifieke onderwijsbehoeften die gewoon gefinancierd of gesubsidieerd onderwijs volgen, kunnen speciale onderwijsleermiddelen ter beschikking krijgen.”

89 See <http://docs.vlaamsparlement.be/pfile?id=1038955> (Accessed on 10 November 2017).

90 See http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi/article_body.pl?language=nl&caller=summary&pub_date=13-08-27&numac=2013035758 (Accessed on 10 November 2017).

91 The author would like to thank Helga Stevens for her help in clarifying the legislative history of this decree.

Basil's make it clear that the Convention is a valuable lobbying instrument to achieve equal rights of all persons with disabilities, including children.

The case has sparked nationwide interest, featuring Basil in various media outlets and thus raising public awareness of the issue and the case as such.

6 Sint-Leo Hemelsdaele School today

6.1 New system

While having full time sign language interpreting for Basil in the school is an improvement compared to the previous situation, it is not sufficient for him to be fully included in his school: for instance, social interaction with his hearing peers outside of the classroom or during break periods cannot be ensured through an interpreter. Also, weekly sessions with his deaf counsellor are insufficient. To remedy this, Sint-Leo Hemelsdaele and Basil's parents successfully applied for funding from "Hart voor Handicap".

6.2 "Hart voor Handicap" project

"Hart voor Handicap" is an organisation that has been supporting innovative projects with regards to the support of people with disabilities for many years, in collaboration with other stakeholders. Concretely, they provide financial support for the creation of innovative projects to foster the inclusion of disabled people in the community.

The funding from "Hart voor Handicap" will go to teaching VGT and Deaf culture to all Sint-Leo Hemelsdaele pupils, especially in Basil's class during World Orientation classes. The hope is that this will facilitate communication between Basil and his friends during breaks between classes, and thus not only ensure his full academic but also his social inclusion. However, at the moment, a final system has not been developed due to the complex process merger of Hemelsdaele school and Sint-Leo school.

7 Conclusion and outlook

7.1 Quality of education

While the full-time sign language provision for Basil has helped significantly with regards to his ability to access teaching content, this still does not provide him with the same level of education as his hearing peers who can access the taught content directly, rather than having content interpreted for them through a professional, who is not trained to be a teacher. By being taught through a sign language interpreter, Basil is learning through a third party as opposed to a teacher using sign language as enshrined in the Article 24 of the UNCRPD. This leads to him missing out on all the nuances that only a teacher can provide. Unfortunately, settings providing bilingual education in sign language and spoken/written language, as briefly addressed above, do not exist sufficiently in Flanders and there is a lack of trained teachers who are fluent in VGT.

Therefore, the UNCRPD Concluding Observations for Belgium (2014) state with regards to Article 24 that “the State party [shall] implement a coherent inclusive education strategy for children with disabilities in the mainstream system and ensure the provision of adequate financial, material and human resources. It recommends that the State party ensure that children with disabilities receive the educational support they need, in particular through the provision of accessible school environments, reasonable accommodation, individual learning plans, assistive technology in classrooms, and accessible and adapted materials and curricula, and guarantee that all teachers, including teachers with disabilities, receive comprehensive training on the use of Braille and sign language with a view to improving the education of all children with disabilities, including boys and girls who are blind, deaf-blind, deaf or hard of hearing. The Committee also recommends that inclusive education should form an integral part of teacher training at university and during continuing professional development.”

Unfortunately, there have not been any serious undertakings yet by the ministry of education with regards to sign language training for teachers as highlighted in these concluding observations (Kusters, 2017).

As highlighted above, Article 24 of the Convention stresses that deaf children should be taught in sign language (rather than via a sign language interpreter). Ideally, this should be done by a deaf teaching professional who is best able to teach at a native level. However, Kusters (2017) points that there are only few deaf employees in Flemish deaf schools and that “regular teaching training programmes in higher education [...] are not fully accessible to deaf people due to a lack of competent sign language interpreters and lack of governmental funding to finance these

interpreters.” Currently, there are fewer than 30 deaf or hard of hearing teachers employed in Belgium (De-Sign Bilingual, 2017). Kusters (2017) points out that in 2016, five of the seven deaf schools in Flanders employed 18 teaching staff. Therefore, it appears that the clear majority of deaf or hard of hearing teachers working in Belgium are employed in special deaf schools and do not work in regular schools in Flanders, showing a clear reticence of the Flemish Government to finance and support deaf teachers who use one of the official languages, VGT.

Another more practical aspect puts the quality of education of deaf children in Flanders at risk. Generally, with regards to deaf learners who are mainstreamed in Flanders, it is common practice to take the child out of the class during school hours for extracurricular activities, such as sessions with a pedagogical counsellor or a speech therapist. Basil’s parents have rejected this practice: his sessions take place during the breaks or after school hours to maximise his educational exposure with his teacher through the sign language interpreter. It was suggested repeatedly that deaf pupils could be taken out of physical education sessions (PE), but Basil’s parents decided against this as they see these as important bonding sessions with his classmates. If Basil was taken out during the classes, he would carry the burden of the stigma of being a “special case”, therefore increasing the risk of social isolation. Concretely, if a deaf pupil misses about one hour of class time per day to meet with either their pedagogical counsellor or their speech therapist, this adds up to 180 hours per year, which means that the pupils miss about 30 days per year (based on the assumption that classes last six hours per day approximately). It is not surprising that due to this, most deaf children are lagging behind their peers academically.

7.2 Quality of social inclusion

With the support of the Sint-Leo Hemelsdaele School, Basil is flourishing as a regular pupil. However, some aspects are still missing that would be necessary to ensure his full social inclusion. Vermeerbergen et al. (2012) mention that it is crucial for deaf learners to have deaf peers, as they have had in deaf schools in the past. However, Basil does not have such peers of his own age at school. There are more deaf children in the school but they are all either much older or younger than him. While there are more deaf children at his age who live in the same town, they are scattered in different schools as other parents were not aware of other deaf children at other schools. Some parents are not part of the VGT-using deaf community, feeling that their children belong to the hearing rather than the deaf community due to CIs or hearing aids. Other parents who were aware of Sint-Leo Hemelsdaele chose not to enrol their children at that school for their own reasons.

This arrangement is an attempt to make the best of the existing situation in Flanders. Basil's parents are very much aware of the risks of limited social interaction with his peers, especially during break times when his interpreter is absent. They are also aware that his classmates learning sign language are unlikely to become fluent in VGT. To add to his social inclusion, his parents ensure that he has regular contact with his deaf peers outside the school, by attending deaf children's clubs in Flanders and joining their activities. He also attends camps organised by the Flemish deaf youth organisation (Doof-Jong). Therefore, he has regular interaction with other deaf children outside the school to offset the difficulties that he regularly faces with regards to his social interactions.

While the system in place is not perfect and still a work in progress, it does allow Basil to receive the same education as pupils his own age, giving him the opportunity to pursue academic studies in the future. Equally important is the fact that he will be able to develop his social skills by interacting with his classmates and friends who learn sign language. And, of course, with the support of his parents and team in Sint-Leo Hemelsdale, we hope that Basil will become an articulate person in all his languages, signed, written, and spoken. All of these aspects are crucial to ensuring that Basil enjoys equal opportunities in life.⁹²

92 The author would like to take the opportunity to thank those people who supported Basil on his educational journey: Kathleen Vercruysse, Philip Gerrard, Tessa Slaughter, Dr Jordan Fenlon, Helga Stevens, Dr Goedele De Clerck, Maaïke Vandenbussche, Piet Coens and the staff of Sint-Leo Hemelsdale, Jessie De Laender, the support team from Sint-Lievenspoort, Doof Vlaanderen and, of course, the sign language interpreters.

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Biography

Mark Wheatley has operated as the Executive Director of the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) since 2007. Under his leadership, EUD has grown to be a more visible organisation, both in terms of its external (social) media coverage and its internal member communication. He is co-author of the EUD book "Sign Language Legislation in the European Union" (2012). Wheatley is the former Managing Director of Red Lizard Ltd, a Deaf-led media design company. He has been a member of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) Expert Group on Human Rights. Furthermore, he was involved as an expert in the World Health Organisation and World Bank 2012 World Report on Disability to ensure that sign language users were adequately included both in terms of terminology and accuracy of information. He also contributed to various academic publications on the topic of sign language and technological development as an enabler of deaf rights.

3. Good practice examples at European and national levels

b) Belgium

ii. Co-enrolment of Hearing, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Pupils in a Mainstream School The Bilingual Classes of Sainte-Marie in Namur (Belgium)

Laurence Meurant (F.R.S-FNRS & University of Namur, Belgium) & Magaly Ghesquière (Ecole et Surdit  & University of Namur, Belgium)

1 Introduction

In 2000, a bilingual programme for deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) pupils was created within a mainstream school in Namur that had only welcomed hearing pupils until that time. The parents of a deaf child were the motivational force behind the creation of this setting. Taking advantage of a decree that allowed schools in the French-speaking part of Belgium to organise teaching by immersion in a language other than French⁹³, they wished to make it possible for groups of DHH children to be taught in sign language (SL) and in spoken language (SpL), and to be provided with a level of schooling similar to that offered to their hearing peers. Although the parents were unaware of the fact, the fundamental principles of the setting they were implementing match the features of what Kirchner described in 1994 as a “co-enrolment” setting (Antia & Metz, 2014).

This chapter first describes the context in which this setting emerged and the way it combines the principles of bilingualism, co-teaching, and inclusion. Then, it presents in more detail three aspects that receive particular attention from the staff in order to ensure that DHH pupils can benefit efficiently from this bilingual and inclusive setting. The first aspect concerns the required adaptation of the pedagogic approach according to the variety of linguistic backgrounds of DHH pupils. The second, in line with Swanwick (2016), is related to the importance for teachers to explicitly establish links between the SL and the SpL in order to support the learning process in a bilingual perspective. And the third aspect concerns the respective roles of bilingual teachers and interpreters in such a setting, the former being responsible for the education of DHH students and the latter being there to ensure the linguistic inclusion of DHH students within the school community.

93 The so called “D cret immersion” (Immersion decree), on teaching by linguistic immersion, has been approved by the *Communaut  franaise de Belgique* on 13 July 1998 and published in the *Moniteur Belge* on 28 August 1998.

2 Context

The bilingual setting operating in the school Sainte-Marie in Namur originated from the wish of the parents of a deaf child that their child be provided with a level of schooling similar to that offered to hearing children in an ordinary school, with all information made accessible to him despite his severe hearing loss. A decree approved in 1998 by the government of the French Community of Belgium had allowed schools to organise instruction by immersion in a language other than French. Thanks to the efforts of the Deaf Association (FFSB) and the Association of Parents of Deaf Children (APEDAF), French Belgian Sign Language (LSFB) was recognised as one of the languages offered in immersion by this decree.

Relying on this legal framework, the parents created a non-profit association, *École et Surdit *, and started looking for an ordinary school that would welcome the project. The Sainte-Marie school, in the centre of Namur, agreed to take on the challenge. Until then, only hearing students were enrolled in the school: around 600 for the 9 class levels of elementary school, i.e., pre-school and primary school (children aged between 2.5 and 12), and around 1000 pupils distributed over the 6 levels of secondary school (young pupils between 12 and 18 years old).

In September 2000, the first bilingual class opened, at the first level of elementary school (children aged 2.5 to 3.5): a bilingual teacher joined the ordinary teacher in her class to teach the small group of DHH pupils, to ensure they were included in the class and benefitted from the same curriculum as their hearing peers. Until 2015, following the progress of the older pupils until the end of secondary school, one additional class has been opened each year replicating the functioning of the first class. At the time of writing, 50 DHH students have been co-enrolled in the programme offered at Sainte-Marie in Namur. The curriculum that is offered to them is identical to the one offered to the hearing pupils of the school and of all mainstream schools in *F d ration Wallonie-Bruxelles*. The degree DHH students obtain at the end of secondary school in this setting legally gives them equal access to higher education and university.

3 Principles: bilingualism, co-teaching, and inclusion

In order to reach the dual objectives of offering DHH pupils a level of education equivalent to that of hearing pupils and of making all information and communication accessible to all, teaching is based on the principle of bilingualism. The fact is that, on the one hand, LSFB, like all sign languages (SLs), has no written tradition and, on the other hand, French is only partly accessible to DHH students. For some it is only accessible in its written form, and for others it is accessible in its written form and in a varying proportion of its spoken form. Therefore, LSFB and French are impossible

to separate in class, where oral and written language constantly intertwine (see below). Bilingualism determines the primary communication mode used in the class. LSFb is the language of face-to-face communication, whereas French is the language used for all written purposes, i.e. on the blackboard, in texts and all documents on paper. But in pre-school (children aged 2.5 to 6), namely before the acquisition of reading and writing, specific bilingual activities are organised on a regular basis for DHH pupils in LSFb and in oral French completed by cued speech⁹⁴ (Leybaert & LaSasso, 2010). These bilingual activities serve various objectives: providing immersion in spoken French made visually accessible, helping pupils distinguish between the two languages and instil bilingualism in their consciousness, creating interest in French through fun activities, and giving them access to the phonology of the French language for the purpose of supporting their literacy development. Indeed, bilingualism is also the objective teachers have for each DHH student at the end of the secondary school. The idea is to ensure that students acquire equal ease and fluency in the two languages, even though each individual will probably have a greater affinity for one of the two. It is worth underlining that this requirement does not apply for the hearing pupils of the class: they are taught and evaluated on the same skills but only in French. This stems from the fact that when the director of the Sainte-Marie school welcomed the bilingual project, the initiators had been careful not to cause upheavals in the existing functioning of the school, because of the ground-breaking nature of the project. The idea of organising bilingual education both for hearing and DHH pupils of the class would have been too revolutionary to be accepted by the director, the teaching staff, and even the parents of hearing pupils. Up to the present, there have been no attempts to create compulsory SL classes for hearing pupils, even though it could have a positive impact on inclusion. Some of the hearing students naturally learn LSFb by being in contact with it and some follow the LSFb classes that are organised in the school for hearing students, but no one is obliged to do so. Hearing students are mainly looked after by the French-speaking teacher.

To be recruited, the bilingual co-teacher (hearing or deaf) must have a teaching degree (as pre-school teacher, primary school teacher, or as secondary school teacher in one of the class subjects) and have a certified UF9 level in LSFb, which corresponds to a C1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale. In addition, they must successfully pass a recruitment assessment for which they are evaluated on both their pedagogical skills and their linguistic competences in LSFb and in (at least written) French. The

94 “Cued Speech is a system that makes use of visual information from speechreading combined with hand shapes positioned in different places around the face in order to deliver completely unambiguous information about the syllables and the phonemes of spoken language.” (Leybaert & LaSasso, 2010).

bilingual teacher is primarily in charge of the DHH group of pupils. Although for linguistic classes (LSFB, French and English), DHH pupils are taught separately with their bilingual teacher, in all non-linguistic classes (math, history, geography, the sciences, physical education, art education, etc.), activities are organised in inclusion, with only a few exceptions when it is pedagogically justified (see below). Co-teaching a group of hearing students in French and a group of DHH students in LSFB and French in parallel within the same classroom cannot be efficiently achieved without good coordination. The co-teachers are hierarchically equal: they have equal status, do lesson planning, execution, and evaluation together. They must take into account that the languages used may affect the logic and the path of the course construction (Duverger, 2009) for several reasons: because DHH students use eyesight to perceive interactions in LSFB, while hearing students following oral interactions keep their eyesight available for other purposes, because DHH students are developing their learning in two languages, while hearing students can do so monolingually, and because the lack of linguistic input caused by their hearing loss greatly affects the level of general awareness of DHH pupils (Convertino et al., 2014). All this means that in terms of achievements and needs, DHH and hearing pupils differ, which forces co-teachers to plan the way they will conduct the lessons and manage the differences in rhythm between the two groups.

As for non-linguistic classes, all extra-curricular activities are organised in inclusion and through co-teaching, for example, going out to a museum, the cinema or a sport centre. Each activity organised by the school (e.g. a conference, a cultural activity by an external visitor or an information session to parents) is at least interpreted in LSFB by the professional interpreters who work within the school and are hired by *École et Surdit *, or even prepared in both languages (e.g. the class show at the school party, a singing project and performance or the poetry for Mother's and Father's Day). LSFB and deaf culture classes are offered to the hearing students at the school, which also fosters inclusion. But the DHH group remains a minority in each bilingual class (on average 15%) and even more so in the school overall (on average 3%). Since neither hearing children nor hearing teachers are required to learn SL, interpreters play an important role regarding the objective of inclusion in such a bilingual education setting.⁹⁵ Section 5 below develops this aspect.

95 The inclusion of DHH pupils and teachers would certainly be improved if hearing teachers were required to learn SL. This could be a worthwhile change to be tested in the forthcoming years. But at the beginning of the project, since the principle was to strictly model DHH education on what was offered to hearing pupils, the fact that hearing teachers did not master SL was an implicit guarantee that the teaching would not be adapted or skirted before having been tested by the bilingual co-teacher.

Due to the specific needs of DHH students, e.g. in terms of acquired knowledge, pace of learning, and the requirements of bilingualism, bilingual teachers face the difficulty of combining the principles of bilingualism and inclusion on a daily basis.⁹⁶ Teachers have the liberty and the responsibility to make thoughtful choices when necessary in order to balance both objectives on a weekly, yearly or two-yearly cycle. They are also free to use interpreters when appropriate and relevant to the pedagogical and the inclusion objectives.

4 Pedagogical differentiation according to the variety of DHH profiles

The profiles of DHH students who are co-enrolled in the programme are as varied as they are in society. They are related to the variety of family contexts and linguistic environments, to the degree of hearing loss of each individual as well as the way communication was established with each child before entering school. Among the pupils who were included from the beginning of the programme, three main profiles have been identified. Each profile has specific needs and requires appropriate pedagogic approaches. It is therefore of high importance for a teacher to differentiate the pupils according to their profile in order to adjust their actions.

The first (and most strongly represented) profile includes pupils who face a severe delay in their linguistic development at the stage of entering school and have almost no language, neither sign nor spoken, at the age of 3. These pupils may have hearing or deaf parents, may or may not have received a cochlear implant, and may or may not wear hearing aids. The backgrounds of individual students vary greatly, but what they have in common is that they are almost unable to communicate, to follow the communication of others, or even to answer a question. Upon entering school, these pupils represent the majority of the DHH students in the programme. When they arrive, the urgent challenge for teachers is to educate them to use their gaze for communication⁹⁷ and involve them in their first exchanges, firstly in SL to ensure the complete accessibility of the linguistic input and help them develop a first language. Their delay in acquiring a first language has more or less harmful effects on their

96 These difficulties seem to be specific to this being a co-enrolment setting. In contacts and exchanges organised with other education schools and settings for the deaf in Europe (in Sweden but also in France, e.g. Toulouse and Poitiers) and in Canada (Montréal), the teachers of Sainte-Marie did not see the same combinations of constraints in their colleagues' practices, because their models did not combine inclusion, bilingualism and the resulting translanguaging.

97 As from an early age, these children have not perceived the meaning of communication, they are often not used to fixing persons and interlocutors with their gaze (Delaporte, 1998). Teachers help them to progressively learn to listen with their eyes, both in SL and in SpL, to detect visual cues including facial expressions, lip movements, cued speech keys, etc.

cognitive and psychological development (Dammeyer, 2015). Teachers must be specifically aware, most notably when teaching students how to read, of the fact that these pupils are often used to not understanding and that they often do not even seek the meaning of phrases, texts, events, or situations. They are able to decode an entire text, be convinced they have read it, but at the same time are unable to infer any meaning from what they decoded. The experience showed that, thanks to the vigilance of the teachers and in close collaboration with the families, speech therapists, and psychologists, pupils of this profile are able to develop competences in at least one of the two languages used in the classroom.

The second profile includes pupils whose first language is LSFb, for whom French becomes a second language during the course of their education. These pupils have DHH parents and LSFb is the language of their family. They arrive at pre-school with a linguistic and cognitive development equivalent to that of their hearing peers. As they discover the existence of French (and of SpL) at school and as this language is seldom valorised in their families, the challenge of teachers with regard to pupils of this profile is to motivate them to meet the requirements and develop the desire to learn French. The bilingual activities organised in pre-school are expected to help them reach this aim and familiarise them with the phonology of the French language through cued speech to later support their acquisition of reading and writing. Indeed, as these pupils cannot learn the alphabet based on the grapheme-sound relationship, they must be guided to rely on their competences in lip-reading and in articulating mouth movements while signing. Teachers are encouraged to make explicit the link between the mouth movements these pupils spontaneously do in signing, the corresponding cued speech form, the fingerspelling of the French word, and its written form. They must also be aware that their development of the French vocabulary will follow the same logic and the same pace as for French as a second language learners, and that they may support it using appropriate methods (e.g. studying morphemes, using a lot of functional reading).

The third (and the least represented) profile includes DHH pupils who have French as a first language and who develop LSFb at school only. These pupils were usually born into hearing families who had no prior knowledge about deafness. They generally get good benefit from their cochlear implant(s) or hearing aids and from their family members' habit of making their speech in French visually complete and accessible, such as the use of cued speech. Pupils representing this profile are a minority of the DHH students enrolled in the programme. They develop linguistically and cognitively without delay, they usually become fluent bilingual students when aged around 15 and show good academic skills. But the challenge they face, along with their families, is to realise and accept their hearing loss. From pre-school onwards, teachers must help

both the children and their families go through this sensitive process in the best possible conditions. As French is their first language, these pupils will follow the same path as most hearing pupils with similar stages of development when it comes to the first stages of learning to read. They may experience specific difficulties related to their hearing loss and the possible incomplete perception they have of some spoken words. In those cases, a consistent use of cued speech helps disambiguate these problems and refine the phonological understanding of French for those children.

Since these profiles are usually mixed in each class, teachers are expected to differentiate their approaches and to adapt them to the needs of the different profiles of DHH pupils while teaching bilingually.

5 Bilingual pedagogy

Regardless of their linguistic profile, all DHH pupils of the programme are supported to become bilingual in LSF and (at least) written French by the end of secondary school. To reach this objective, it is essential that both languages are considered as equally rich and respected by all parties in the school community, and notably by all teachers. But besides this minimum requirement, over the 17 years of their experience the teachers of the programme have developed appropriate pedagogic processes in order to make the bilingual approach compatible with the specific needs of DHH students. The core principle of this bilingual pedagogy lies in the permanent and explicit articulation between the SL, the SpL and the concepts being taught. In line with what Swanwick (2016) describes about translanguaging in bilingual classes with DHH students, or what Coste (2003) describes regarding language alternation in the bilingual education of hearing students, teachers of the programme at Sainte-Marie are used to teaching all concepts by presenting them in two languages and by making explicit the relation between both ways of explaining, using, and defining them. The students are trained to re-use concepts in both languages and to develop metalinguistic awareness about the correspondences between the linguistic structures they use in each language: in LSF, in written French and, for those who are able to, in spoken French (Ghesquière et al., 2015).

However, such a bilingual approach cannot be confused with a setting in which pupils would be immersed alternatively in one and then the other language and expected to build by themselves any relation between both linguistic systems. In the setting described here, it is the teacher's responsibility to compare languages and to train pupils' metalinguistic skills. This means that a bilingual teacher, in addition to having good competences in LSF and in French (written French at least), must be able to switch easily from one language to the other, and even have contrastive linguistic competences. Unfortunately, in their efforts to alternate and compare languages, teachers still face a tremendous lack of

scientific knowledge about the best practices of co-enrolment settings, the pedagogic adaptations they require, and about the linguistic description of LSFb and its comparison with French. Such knowledge could provide valuable pedagogical support. In this respect, the partnership between the school programme and the LSFb laboratory of the University of Namur is of high importance, even though quickly making up the lack of knowledge regarding the LSFb-French comparison would require enormous investment in research, which regrettably remains currently unrealistic.

6 Bilingual teachers and interpreters

As mentioned above, the requirements of the bilingual pedagogy, combined with the specific needs and rhythm of DHH pupils mean that teachers are not at any one time able to ensure simultaneously that the pupils develop their bilingual competence and that they are rightly included in the class activities and interactions. In order to make bilingualism and inclusion as compatible as possible as often as possible, teachers are encouraged to make relevant use of the interpreters that are involved in the programme.

Outside the classroom, interpreters ensure communication within the school community and between the variety of actors it includes, in all situations that involve hearing and DHH actors meeting: the director, teachers, educators, psycho-medical service personnel, and parents. Interpreters are also essential for DHH teachers to participate in the life of the educational team at a school-wide level⁹⁸ for pedagogic consultations or for coordination between co-teachers⁹⁹, and during meetings with parents. But besides that, interpreters may be called upon within the classroom to act as pedagogic support. This is particularly relevant when co-teachers want students to be involved in discussions or debates, or when they elicit exchanges between students, for example in teamwork, oral presentations, or collective discussions.

However, within the classroom, interpreters remain in the background of the pedagogical relationship. In compliance with the ethical principles defining their profession, namely fidelity of content transmission, neutrality, and confidentiality, the role of interpreters cannot be confused with the role of the bilingual teacher, as described previously. Indeed, it is out of the scope of the interpreter's action to correct the linguistic production of a pupil in LSFb, to comment on the difference between a structure in LSFb and its counterpart in French, or to ensure the student's

98 The proportion of DHH teachers within the school is of 10 out of a total of 150 hearing teachers.

99 Hearing and DHH co-teachers both develop abilities to adapt to each other and can discuss directly most everyday issues. They call upon an interpreter when it comes to collaborate for a more consistent work.

understanding. Likewise, it is also out of the interpreter's mandate to intervene on the attitude of a student, or to discuss pedagogic choices made by the speaking teacher. In the same way, an interpreter is not expected to discuss with parents about what has happened in class or to discuss the situation of one student with colleagues.

In such an inclusive and bilingual setting, the roles of interpreters and teachers are complementary. Interpreters are at the service of teachers, students, the school, parents, and the educational mission of school in general. They are primarily actors in favour of inclusion and equity. In that vein, the position of the interpreters that DHH students meet at school is representative of the professional interpretation services they will use outside the school.

7 Conclusion

Following general schooling is a great challenge for all DHH students and remains more demanding than for hearing learners. The bilingual and inclusive programme offered at Sainte-Marie in Namur is certainly not a solution to all the challenges faced by DHH students and their teachers. At the present time, we do not have an overview of the success of the academic education of DHH pupils and their social inclusion in Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, and consequently no means to evaluate the benefits of the setting offered at Sainte-Marie. Nevertheless, this setting attempts to offer a coherent proposal that does not avoid the difficulties, but takes into account the implications of hearing loss, the variety of DHH student profiles, and the urgency for DHH young adults to be better included in society. From our experience, the most important requirements for a successful inclusive approach such as the one implemented in Sainte-Marie relate to the equal consideration of both languages by all staff members and in all teaching situations (lessons, evaluations, cultural activities, etc.), to the quality of the collaboration between co-teachers, to the linguistic and pedagogic support of the teachers, to the fair compliance with the curriculum designed for hearing students, and finally to the support from the school directors and teaching staff. The main remaining challenges concern improving the training of teachers and developing scientific and pedagogic support for their difficult task.

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Biographies

Laurence Meurant is Research Associate for the Fund for Scientific Research (F.R.S-FNRS) and lecturer at the University of Namur where she heads the Laboratory of French Belgian Sign Language (LSFB-Lab) and teaches general linguistics and contrastive linguistics between LSFB and French. Her research focuses on the linguistic description of French Belgian Sign Language, encompassing morphology, syntax, enunciation and discourse. She also does research in the area of contrastive linguistics (French - LSFB) and on linguistic issues of education in the context of bimodal-bilingual (Spoken - Sign Language) learning. Principal investigator of the Incentive Grant for Scientific research - M.I.S. "Corpus LSFB" (2012-2015), she has collected the first digital open-access corpus of movies and annotations of French Belgian Sign Language.

Magaly Ghesquière was the first teacher involved in the bilingual programme designed for deaf and hard of hearing students at Sainte-Marie school in Namur. After more than 10 years of experience in teaching, she now coordinates the bilingual programme at the elementary school level and is in charge of sharing the knowledge and the achievements gained since the beginning of the programme.

3. Good practice examples at European and national levels

c) France

i. Association 2LPE CO: Bilingual enrolment for immersion and collective inclusion

Chrystell Lamothe (Director of 2LPE CO, Poitiers, France)

1 Introduction

The Two Languages for One Education Association (2LPE) was born in the early 1980s in France. It was created by a triangular initiative composed of deaf parents, professionals and deaf adults, researchers and other citizens. Its main mission is to offer bilingual education to deaf children throughout the course of their education. The primary objective of 2LPE is the recognition of sign language as the first language of communication, both as the language of instruction and as a subject, facilitated especially by the presence of deaf professionals and interpreters.

A bilingual immersion programme is offered from kindergarten to university using both languages: French Sign Language (LSF) and French. The programme was established in collaboration between 2LPE CO and the mainstream primary school Paul Blet as well as the mainstream lower secondary school Henri 4 in Poitiers. It promotes biculturalism through the inclusion of deaf learners in the mainstream environment, the aim of which is to allow pupils to learn together and to change their preconceptions of each other.

After first establishing the historical context of 2LPE and outlining the values and foundations of the association, this chapter will focus on one of its services, the Service of Bilingual Education (SEB), through its pedagogical and educational project from kindergarten to university. The final section will present more precisely the profiles of children and families participating in this project and the general framework within which the project takes place.

2 Historical background of bilingual education in France

From the 16th century onwards, two opposing theories regarding the education of deaf young children emerged in France. The first, made famous by l'Abbé de l'Épée, posits that educators should use sign language to teach a group of students. The second theory primarily focuses on teaching in the spoken language.

However, over time, the medical model of deafness became increasingly dominant and the oral method, which excluded the use of sign language, developed. France decided to prohibit the use of sign language in deaf education at the Milan Congress, the international congress of deaf educators that was held in Milan in 1880. Regional and minority languages, including sign languages, were officially prohibited in schools.

Sign language saw a period of renewal that started in the 1970s. In this decade, various identity movements in France emerged claiming the right to diversity. As a result, several deaf and French language professionals demanded the recognition of sign language and bilingualism. This movement, spearheaded by deaf adults, parents, and professionals, is called “the deaf awakening”. It was after this period that three national associations were established: IVT¹⁰⁰, the ALSF¹⁰¹ and 2LPE.

3 2LPE Midwest (CO): cradle of bilingualism in France

The 2LPE Two Languages for One Education Association was born in this period. The 2LPE Centre West Association (2LPE CO) registered in 1988 is part of the national 2 LPE Association. Its objective is to find solutions to the following three issues:

- The dissatisfaction of parents of deaf children with regards to the lack of communication within the family and the limited academic success of their children;
- The emergence of an awareness of deaf identity within the deaf community, in particular with regards to sign language and the role that deaf teaching professionals could play in the education deaf children;
- The need for professional researchers to develop educational strategies that are more educationally efficient and more respectful of deaf children.

The 2LPE association has defended the right of deaf children to receive a bilingual education based on sign language and French language practice in their family, school, and life outside of school. This positive, constructive perspective sees the deaf child as a linguistic minority, rather than a child that needs to be cured. It focuses on who the child is and not on what he/she is lacking, which has revolutionised sociological, linguistic, and educational references.

100 The International Visual Theater is a laboratory for artistic, linguistic and pedagogical research on sign language.

101 The Academy for LSF teaches and raises awareness about sign language.

On a legislative level, Article 33 of Act No. 91-73 of 18 January 1991 legally recognised this right to bilingual education and Act No. 2005-102 of 11 February 2005 for equal rights and opportunities and the participation and citizenship of people with disabilities officially recognised sign language and the freedom of families to choose between bilingual (in LSF and written/spoken French) or monolingual (French only) education for their child.

Practically, despite a hostile context to this vision of the deaf child, 2LPE has defended the right of deaf children to a bilingual education since the 1980s, creating the first bilingual class at a public school in Poitiers in 1984. Since then, the association 2LPE created bilingual classes in ordinary schools in several French cities to satisfy parents' demands.

4 The values of 2LPE

The founding texts of 2LPE state that “a deaf child is first and foremost a child”, who will develop through successes and failures, happiness and sorrows. More concretely, the values of the organisation are the following:

- A positive vision of deaf children;
- A bilingual and bicultural educational project respecting the particularities of deaf children;
- The child is placed in the centre of the educational project;
- The project is family-based to give parents a role in the education of their children.

The association 2LPECO runs several services that are part of the association's missions defined above. These services are the following:

- Service for children age 0-3: this service provides early childhood education of children through partnerships between specialist and ordinary early childhood care facilities;
- Bilingual Education Service (SEB): this service is for children from kindergarten to the end of lower secondary school (age 3 to 15) (elaborated on below);
- Youth Student Accompaniment Service (SAJE): this service is for young people after college, with the objective to provide access to schooling through interpreters that corresponds to the individual study choices of young deaf people (general, technological, vocational, work-based learning, universities);
- Sign Language Interpreter Service: this service addresses internal needs linked to the activity of SEB (professionals and deaf and hearing parents), associative activities (Board of Directors and mixed members) and for other needs in terms of accessibility (public and private authorities, individuals, cultural and political events, remote interpreting, etc.).

5 Presentation of the Bilingual Education Service (SEB)

5.1 Bilingual teaching project

Since its creation, the SEB has mainly used its resources to educate children. However, school enrolment is not considered a means to an end, but rather as an access that ensures the intellectual, linguistic, and social development of the deaf child, encouraging the child's autonomy and ability to live in a hearing environment.

This service is based on the principles of bilingual immersion and community inclusion. According to Briquet (2006), language immersion pioneer and creator of the first immersion class in Belgium in 1989, immersion involves "[...] placing an individual in a linguistic context which can be compared to a bath that immerses and permeates the individual."¹⁰²

In these bilingual classes, two terms are recognised by the national education ministry: immersive education and language parity in the teaching schedule.

According to the Larousse Dictionary (2017), bilingualism is defined as the situation of an individual who is fluent in two different languages. Furthermore, the linguist Harriet Jisa Hombert, defines bilinguals as people "who have the ability to produce meaningful statements in two languages and who use two languages in their everyday lives" (Chenu & Jisa, 2009).

With regards to deaf bilingualism, an amendment (Official Bulletin, 2008) to the Act of February 2005 concerning deaf bilingualism added further detail. The amendment considers that bilingualism is part of the individual potential of each child. Beginning from the pupil's individual knowledge of French sign language, however extensive or minimal it may be, the school strives to establish gradual access to French language for each deaf student whose family has elected for bilingual education by exposing them to the language from age 3 within the inclusive classroom, e.g. through the use of posters, the learning of the surnames of their peers, reading illustrated books etc., similarly to hearing children of the same age. In the life of the young deaf person, the use of French sign language corresponds to oral communication and the use of written French language corresponds to written communication.

102 Translated from French: "Au figuré et en matière d'apprentissage des langues, il s'agit de placer un individu dans un contexte linguistique qui puisse être comparé à un bain tant il immerge et imprègne l'individu."

Within the SEB, sign language acquisition occupies a natural place in all activities, and this influences the structuring of learning processes, particularly with regards to language development. Regarding deaf children, the LSF environment needs to adapt to the specific, atypical characteristics, which are typical of sign language transmission. For example, because 90% of deaf children have hearing parents (French National Authority for Health, 2009) who usually do not know sign language, deaf children often cannot fully acquire a language from their parents at an early age. Still today, despite early screening campaigns, the average age at which deafness is diagnosed in France is 18 months. Before receiving such a diagnosis, parents are likely not to be aware of the deafness of their child and will have communicated orally with them. However, the deaf child will have likely understood little or nothing at all. After such a diagnosis, some parents who choose bilingual education for their child will learn sign language from associations or specialised early childhood education services that, unfortunately, still do not exist in great numbers in France. Additionally, language acquisition is a lengthy process. When children enter kindergarten between the age of 3 and 5, some will not have acquired any language from their home environment. It is therefore crucial that the deaf child is exposed to and immersed in sign language as soon as possible through contact with deaf professionals and other deaf children of the same age who have already acquired sign language and who use sign language throughout the day.

2LPECO considers that knowledge of a first language (in this case, LSF) is a prerequisite for the acquisition of a second language (French). In such a bilingual perspective, it is necessary to develop the pupils' skills to allow them to move back and forth between LSF and French, which must be refined during cycle 3 (ages 9-11), but is not expected to be systematic yet. The aim is to progressively lead the student to become aware of the essential differences between the two linguistic systems and of the general differences between oral and written languages.

Learning of the written language helps deaf learners to learn about a common culture and ensures that they have a mode of communication with hearing people who do not speak sign language. However, it must be remembered that access to written French is synonymous with the acquisition of a second language for deaf children. Studying written French in our educational immersion project does not involve the phonological method, such as deciphering graphemes and phonemes, but involves a direct approach of visual written language, without linking it to spoken language. This allows the deaf children to read while focusing on the meaning and not on the transcription of an oral language, which they cannot hear. Knowledge of the two languages is acquired in a transversal way, across all academic subjects, and both LFS and French are used as teaching languages.

It is important to rely on metalinguistic explorations of sign language to approach the study of LSF. In many cases, this involves conducting contrastive studies between the two languages. Within our project, we try to introduce spoken French according to a positive vision of deafness where the focus is not on the lack of hearing or the impulse to “fix”, but where it is accepted that the child has a different language and culture. Spoken French is not acquired to repair a deficiency but to allow the child to learn how to communicate with its hearing environment, additionally to its first language, which is sign language. To support the child’s spoken language acquisition, it is important to build on its desire to communicate with others in spoken language, a process, which it has learned ideally from an early age through sign language. This is what Virole (2006) underlined when he wrote: “The need of early representation and communication of the deaf child combined with a shared practice of sign language with the parents increases the desire to communicate. It is quite possible to undertake speech learning relying on the semantic representation of the signs language that helps to understand the sense.”¹⁰³

Beyond specific work with a speech therapist outside of the school time proposed by SEB to children and families who wish for it, the inclusion of deaf children in ordinary classes proposes an organic immersion into French spoken language. This immersion happens differently according to the degree of deafness of the child in question. All children are immersed in their classroom with other deaf learners and with hearing peers, accompanied by two teachers, one deaf and one hearing. According to the degree of deafness and potential assistive technology (hearing aids or cochlear implants), some children will have access to a spoken language environment and will be able to develop their spoken language and lip-reading skills alongside input from individual classes with a speech therapist. Children who are profoundly deaf and do not have hearing aids or cochlear implants will not have direct access to spoken language, but the teacher or interpreter will be able to share with them the specificities of the spoken language (the link between sounds and letters, the noise levels in the classroom etc.)

5.2 Collective inclusion

Although the term “inclusion” is not explicitly used in the Act of 11 February 2005, the values and principles of action attached to it refer to a philosophy of human rights within an inclusive society. Le Capitaine

103 Translated from French: “Le besoin de représentation et de communication précoce de l’enfant sourd étant assouvi par l’usage partagé avec les parents de la langue des signes, le désir de communiquer ne fait que croître. Il est alors tout à fait possible d’entreprendre un apprentissage de la parole d’autant plus facilité qu’on peut s’appuyer au niveau du sens sur la représentation sémantique de la langue des signes.”

(2013) emphasises that “the concept of inclusion is here a turning point, that gives all persons the full right to take their place, regardless of their characteristics, in society and its organisations. Inclusion opens the right to singularity, to difference, and it does not tolerate the exclusion from social participation on the pretext of this difference.”¹⁰⁴ According to this principle, these deaf children are in regular classrooms and learn the same content as their classmates. The SEB inclusion project extends also to deaf adults, such as co-teachers, teachers and professionals who accompany disabled children. The objective of the inclusion of young people and adults is for them to learn how to “live together”.

The Act from 2005 states with regards to the education of children with disabilities in Article 19 that “every child, every teenager with a disability [...] is enrolled in school or in one of the institutions [...] closest of his domicile, which is his reference establishment.” Still, for deaf children the question of bilingualism needs to be looked at through a different lens, as it involves the learning of a language and a culture. As the amendment of the Act from 2005 (Official Bulletin, 2008) states, “the acquisition of a language is inseparable from the appropriation of the cultural dimension that it conveys and which structures it. This can be envisaged only within a group, within the framework of a collective system, where the conditions for natural and authentic communication can be put in place.”¹⁰⁵

The project proposes a system of collective inclusion, where a group of (on average) 2-5 deaf children of the same age are together in a mainstream classroom. This supports the deaf child’s need to build his/her language skills alongside peers. Belonging to the sub-group of deaf children allows the deaf child to understand that he/she is not alone in dealing with this difference. It is also important to note that the bilingual project is a school project built by and for all school stakeholders, both children and adults. It is not an instruction adapted exclusively for deaf children but a project that is for all children.

104 Translated from French: “Le concept d’inclusion vient ici mettre un point d’orgue, celui de la place de plein droit de toutes les personnes. L’inclusion ouvre le droit à la singularité, à la différence, ne tolérant pas d’exclusion à la participation sociale sur le prétexte de cette différence.”

105 Translated from French: “L’acquisition d’une langue est indissociable de l’appropriation de la dimension culturelle qu’elle véhicule et qui la structure. Cela n’est envisageable qu’au sein d’un groupe, c’est-à-dire dans le cadre d’un dispositif collectif, où peuvent se mettre en place les conditions d’une communication naturelle et authentique.”

5.3 Professionals involved in the SEB

The SEB's professional team is a mix of deaf and hearing professionals, each with the skills and qualifications necessary to help children acquire the languages, to learn, to socialise with the deaf children and young people, and to accompany families. The professional team focused on schooling is mainly composed of co-teachers, deaf LSF teachers, and sign language interpreters. In the following paragraphs, we will describe the role of each of those professionals.

Co-teachers: In our project, co-teachers are deaf professionals with sign language as a first language whose qualifications and professional experience are in the academic field. These professionals are the main point of reference from a linguistic point of view (enabling the acquisition of the sign language) and are a role model for the deaf child. Co-teachers transmit the expected learning content simultaneously with the hearing teacher of the class directly to the deaf children. Co-teachers do not interpret the content taught by the hearing teachers, but transmit the objectives to be achieved to the children and sometimes adapt the contents or the teaching speed to the needs of the deaf children.

LSF Teachers: These professionals oversee the learning of LSF in group exercises with only the deaf children. They establish the progressions, schedules, tools, and evaluation following the official national education programme, published in September 2008.

Interpreters - LSF / French: These bilingual hearing professionals are trained to interpret and translate. They must respect the code of professional conduct of the profession, such as neutrality, impartiality, the transmission of the intentions of the speaker, as well as professional confidentiality. The typical role of interpreters is to interpret simultaneously the spoken or signed messages of deaf students, teachers, and hearing pupils. However, the situation in the school environment is particular, as the interpreters also assume a responsibility of being linguistic role models to the deaf students and to assist in communication, as they understand two languages and cultures.

Learning how interpretation works is also an important element in the development of deaf children and youth. For deaf children, understanding the "mechanism" of interpretation and translation represents an important learning outcome that is necessary for their adult life. The complexity of understanding the interpretation process requires genuine linguistic maturity and adequate sign language skills from the children. For deaf children to be able to access and fully participate in class exchanges, the presence of an interpreter, who guarantees that content is transmitted in a neutral and accurate manner, is ensured from time to time from primary

levels onwards.

Additionally, more professionals are involved in pedagogical, educational, or therapeutic activities, such as mediators, psychologists, speech therapists, trainers in sign language for families, coordinators of educational adaptations, and more. They are all bilingual professionals, some of whom are deaf.

From kindergarten to college, the presence of each professional is dependent on their skills and the objectives to be attained by the children whom they accompany. For instance, the presence of deaf professionals will be much more important in primary education than in later levels of education. Deaf professionals are invaluable linguistic models, able to understand deaf children better than anyone else and to transmit to them a perfectly mastered sign language, which is crucial at an age when children are still acquiring this language.

5.4 Interaction with family members

Every child needs to be able to communicate and to be understood. However, when parents discover that their child is deaf, they are often afraid that their child's communication is poorer than that of other children. Hearing parents, who do not know sign language, often find themselves in a situation where they no longer know how to talk to their child, as they believe that communication and understanding can only be ensured through speech, while other modes of communication—such as sign language, using gestures and visual expression instead of words—can work just as well. Furthermore, while hearing parents of young deaf children do not speak sign language yet, Sign Supported Speech, a mixture of spoken language and accompanying signs, can also be used to ensure communication.

Parents react differently to learning that their child is deaf: some struggle to find accurate solutions with regards to communicating with their child, some focus on a medical model perspective of trying to fix the lack of hearing and only use spoken language, and some develop different communication tools and acquire sign language in addition to spoken language use. We know the importance of early childhood development, as the reactions of parents to their child's deafness determine early childhood language acquisition and cognitive development. Also, these reactions will have repercussions on their relations with the various professionals involved in their child's education.

However, the parenting issues we experience are not limited to hearing families. For deaf families, their approach to deafness is also linked to their own experiences. Their reactions relate to the mainstream school environment, which they often do not know, as many deaf parents were educated in special schools. Thus, they often are notably unaware of the codes and expectations they have not acquired. Their relationship to languages (sign language and French language) and their educational backgrounds can also put them in difficulty when faced with the demands of the school, the learning of their children, and their role as parents. The bilingual schooling project cannot ignore the ways in which these factors affect the child. This is a comprehensive project that considers all children and their entourage and the team must take into account these different issues related to parental influence and their experience with regards to deafness, some experiencing it themselves since their childhood and others discovering an unknown situation.

The group of additional professionals involved in pedagogical, educational, or therapeutic activities also accompanies families to allow them to better understand the education of their child. Deaf children and their families do not universally experience difficulties. In fact, many children from deaf families do not require this type of support, however, the association wants to ensure that children or families who experience temporary, occasional, or more severe difficulties can receive this support. Certain academic, psychological, or linguistic difficulties can have repercussions on the educational achievement and sometimes the child cannot sufficiently focus on achieving its educational goals due to them.

Furthermore, the association created a weekly LSF workshop that is open to family members and friends. The participants are deaf and hearing. The objective of the workshop is to create relationships between parents and to allow deaf and hearing parents to communicate with each other and share their varied methods of communication. These relationships will empower families to overcome initial reservations and fears of contact. This workshop also addresses linguistic, historical, and cultural issues linked to deafness and sign language to allow parents to understand better what their children are learning in school.

5.5 Profiles of enrolled children and their families

In 2017, SEB has accompanied, from kindergarten to university, 35 deaf children: 5 with severe hearing loss and 30 with profound hearing loss. All were deaf from birth or became deaf in an early postnatal period. The children are in the following age groups: 12 in kindergarten, 14 in elementary school, and 9 in middle school. 4 children wear hearing aids, 3 have cochlear implants and the remaining children have no prostheses.

With regards to their families, 23 have deaf families, 10 have hearing families, and 2 have mixed hearing-deaf families.

According to research of the French National Authority for Health (2009), these numbers show a large gap between the national average of 90% of deaf children born into the hearing families and the population that join our service. This difference can be explained mostly by the presence of the Regional Institute for Young Deaf (IRJS), which since the late 19th century, led to an increase of the deaf population in the region. The opening of the first French bilingual class in Poitiers in 1984 also explains the strong presence of deaf families who predominantly choose bilingual projects for their children. Some children who benefit today from our bilingual project are the second generation, which means that one of their parents was once accompanied by our service throughout their school career. This geographical mobility of families brings clarification as to the significant number of children accompanied by SEB which contrasts with the estimated number of births of deaf children in the French department in which the school is located: 20 are from our region of Poitou-Charentes, 15 (including 5 hearing families) are from other regions of France. This large proportion of children from other regions is mainly explained by the very few bilingual alternatives for inclusion for deaf children in our territory. Poitiers is the only city in France that offers inclusive bilingual education in a mainstream classroom from kindergarten to the end of secondary school and its service provision activities even extend to support students in university through the SAJE.

6 Evaluation

It is very difficult to assess the success of deaf children and young people in a course such as ours. The aim of the association is to develop and empower young deaf people and yet we are often asked for results on other “indicators” of success: academic achievement, grades, and exam results. In the context presented in the previous chapters, it is difficult to dissociate the “apparent”, measurable results and other elements affecting the child’s journey and the journeys of those around him. Whether the child has deaf or hearing parents, the place that sign language has within the family, their view of deafness and whether parents accept their child’s deafness are all critical contextual elements that must be taken into account. They are as critical as the educational and academic context, the educational institutions, the policies, and the means granted for the setting up of such educational projects and the pedagogical research. And finally, what projects can we compare our educational project with? The results of hearing children, deaf children in special schools, individual mainstreaming, and bilingual paths are difficult to compare, particularly with the latter being very few and relatively recent. Usually, educational outcomes and examinations that assess goals to be achieved have been

designed for children who hear and yet these outcomes are often used to evaluate the results of deaf children in different educational settings.

We thus lack objective criteria for evaluation. We can evaluate deaf children on their knowledge and their first language, but evaluating knowledge of French spoken/written language is already more difficult. For instance, deaf sign language using children in bilingual classes develop reading strategies that work differently than strategies of hearing children or oral deaf children and thus cannot be compared. What we can evaluate are the exam results, the school career, future labour market inclusion and, even if it is more objective, the personal and professional growth of the student, which represent the main objective of education.

In our setting, the success rate over the last 5 years in the SEB and the SAJE has been at 92% including 5 *mentions* (which a student receives if he/she receives more than 14 points out of 20). More concretely, 8 deaf learners sat the lower secondary school general education exam, which is taken at age 14 before choosing a specific course for upper secondary education. Of these, 7 obtained the diploma and 3 passed with 70-80% (*mention bien*). With regards to upper secondary school, which students finish around age 18 giving them access to tertiary or professional education, 7 deaf students sat the final exams (*baccalauréat*), 6 passed the exam, 2 of them with *mention bien*. In upper secondary school, courses of study correspond to the topic area that students choose, either in the generalist and technological course (3 deaf learners followed the economic and social sciences course) or the vocational course (computer graphics, fashion design, economic and administrative management, aquaculture). After finishing the vocational course, 3 deaf learners continued their studies in a technical college (*brevet de technicien supérieur*) and obtained their diploma in social and family economics, aquaculture, and computer graphics. We have also three deaf students that followed a work-linked vocational training course and obtained a certificate of professional competence (*certificat d'aptitude professionnelle, CAP*) in woodwork, carpentry, and pastry making.

There are determining factors we see with regards to most of the deaf learners who experience what could be defined as a “regular” school career, in the sense that they do not encounter major difficulties, remain in the same educational track from start to finish and finish school successfully: These are the presence of sign language from early childhood onwards (before 3 years old), the use and the valorisation of this language by the child’s family, the acceptance of deafness and immersion in deaf culture as well as coherence between the school project and the family project for both languages.

These results are indeed increasingly expected by all stakeholders. Everyone seems to be looking for the system that will be the most effective,

but there is a risk of simplifying processes and forgetting that every child and every family are unique, making it difficult to evaluate what is most valuable for each individual.

7 Conclusion

The idea that led the association to develop its services is driven by the ambition of ensuring accessibility, equal opportunities for all, and a society that welcomes differences as a wealth. The different services have evolved over 30 years in a very positive manner and the number of children that are enrolled keeps increasing. Unfortunately, there still are not enough bilingual educational offers available in France, which increases the pressure on many families to move when enrolling their children in such a school. We see that it is mostly deaf parents who choose this bilingual model for their deaf children.

The technical and medical progress, such as early screening and implantation, the lack of information sources presenting the different options (oralist or bilingual education) from early childhood onwards, and the system of individualised mainstreaming lead many families to seek bilingual options only after their child has failed in a mainstream oral school. Consequently, children come to our school later and later, around the age of 5. Due to this, our staff need to respond to the individual educational needs of a group of very heterogeneous children, while at the same time devising collective teaching methods for all learners.

In the future, we would like to carry out more in-depth research with regards to tools for evaluating deaf children's acquisition of written French, tools that are not build based on previous spoken language knowledge, as is the case for tools applied to hearing children.

Our model is atypical in the sense that it proposes learning methods based on bilingualism and collective inclusion, rather than those in special schools for deaf children or classrooms in which a deaf child is mainstreamed individually. We hope that future generations of deaf and hearing students will continue to learn how to live together and to appreciate human diversity.

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Biography

Chrystell Lamothe has worked for 18 years as an interpreter in various educational levels ranging from kindergarten to secondary school at 2LPE CO's bilingual education setting in Poitiers. She has been the director of this association since 2009 and is responsible for managing the school's various services.

3. Good practice examples at European and national levels

d) The Netherlands

i. Inclusive education of deaf students through co-enrolment: a Dutch example

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1 Introduction

Since 2014, the Dutch Appropriate Education Act has changed the educational landscape in the Netherlands. This act promotes inclusion for as many students as possible in mainstream schools and thus fewer referrals of students to special education. However, inclusion of deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) students is not self-evident and calls for specific adaptations of the educational context. It is not self-evident because access to communication and content, a precondition for real inclusion, cannot be guaranteed in many mainstream schools.

Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) deals with education and, in paragraphs 3b and 3c, the group of DHH students is explicitly addressed. In this article, it is mentioned that “states parties shall take appropriate measures including:

b) Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community,

c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.” (UNCRPD, 2006).

These preconditions for inclusive education of DHH students are not easy to realise in a mainstream school, especially for DHH students who are enrolled in a mainstream school on an individual basis. It is difficult, if not impossible, to develop the linguistic identity prevalent in deaf communities when there is no deaf community present. Therefore, in 2003, we started a co-enrolment programme for DHH students in a regular school. In a co-enrolment programme, DHH and hearing students are taught together

by mainstream and specialised teachers of the deaf in one classroom. The programme has been evaluated from the start of the programme onwards.

This chapter will focus on the implementation of aspects of article 24 of the UNCRPD. It will provide an overview of the most important aspects of the co-enrolment programme and of the evaluation of the programme. More detailed information can be found in Hermans et al. (2014) and in a chapter in an upcoming edited volume about co-enrolment programmes worldwide (De Klerk et al., in press).

2 Co-enrolment for DHH students in the Netherlands

Currently, 27 DHH students from Kentalis Talent, the school for the deaf, are enrolled in primary education at the regular school 'de Bolster' in Sint Michielsgestel. De Bolster and Kentalis Talent cooperate intensively to realise a co-enrolment programme for DHH and hearing students. These 27 DHH students are enrolled in 7 different classes. There are approximately 330 hearing students in the school spread over 12 classes. The co-enrolment programme combines the best of two worlds: the best practices from special and mainstream education (De Klerk et al., in press). Staff from special and mainstream education cooperate to include all students in the educational programme of the primary school. The special education staff bring in the specific knowledge of and skills with regards to didactic and pedagogic strategies for DHH students: strategies for language development, identity formation, deaf culture, access to communication, curriculum access and for the social and emotional development of DHH students. The staff of the school for the deaf have acquired their skills and knowledge through a deaf education training programme after their initial training as a general teacher or speech and language therapist. They have also acquired further skills and knowledge in their daily practice at the school for the deaf. They are trained in the use of sign language and sign supported Dutch. These staff members are very experienced in the field of deaf education. There are also sign language interpreters present in every classroom with DHH students.

The mainstream education staff bring in the specific knowledge and skills of general education. They are trained as general teachers. Some of them have had additional training in diverse aspects of education. Several have followed or are following a sign language course. The strengths of the teachers in this particular mainstream school concern their classroom management skills and their ability to stimulate cooperative classroom work and the independence of their students. The regular school is also used to work with students from different backgrounds. It is a school for all students regardless of learning potential and social economic status, as the school chooses to value the strengths of every individual student. The staff of the regular school consist of general classroom teachers and a

language coordinator. The special education staff consist of teachers of the deaf, a deaf sign language teacher, and a speech and language therapist. Special and mainstream education have formed a mutual support team of coaches and members of the board to support the content and organisation of the programme.

In the classroom, the regular classroom teacher and the teacher of the deaf use different forms of co-teaching. The two teachers are both present at the same time in the classroom for parts of the week. The amount of time the specialised teacher of the deaf is available depends on the number of DHH students in the classroom and on their educational needs. It ranges from approximately five hours a week, with two DHH students in class, to approximately sixteen hours a week, with six DHH students in class. However, Sign Language of the Netherlands (SLN) interpreters are available all the time. The forms of teaching employed by the teachers are based on the co-teaching model of Clarke & DeNuzzo (2003).

One of the most important success factors for this type of co-enrolment programme is the commitment of all members in the programme. Every single teacher, classroom assistant, and other staff member of the primary school and of the school for the deaf must be willing to invest in the cooperation and must be willing to contribute to the development of the programme. It is a challenge to fully realise inclusion for all students in the programme and therefore every person's cooperative participation is needed.

3 Creating a linguistic and cultural identity

Andrew Solomon's view on vertical and horizontal identity (Solomon, 2012) offers a good starting point for the discussion about identity formation for DHH students. According to Solomon, vertical identity is the identity that is transferred by parents. It is about their values and attributions. In addition to this vertical identity, many people also acquire a horizontal identity: an identity that is more or less foreign to parents and is acquired through peers or other adults. This is often the case for DHH students, most whom are born to hearing families. They meet DHH peers or adults earlier or later in life and with them they share deafness and ways of being deaf. This experience of being unable or less able to hear is distinctive from their parents and the majority of people, who can hear. It is not only this experience, which is distinctive. Many DHH people also use and prefer a form of visual communication. This can be sign language or a sign system that supports the spoken language.

The current generation of DHH students shows more variety than ever before in their experiences related to being deaf. They also show a larger variety in communicative options that they use or choose. We also see more

fluid identities in DHH students, identities that may shift over time, place, and people, depending on the context that the DHH student functions in. This considerable variety is to a large extent caused by implementation of recent technological developments like digital hearing aids and cochlear implants. Consequently, we see a growing number of DHH students who have more and better access to a spoken language. The pitfall can be however to see them merely as hearing persons, since many of them are not recognisable anymore as a DHH person based on for example their voice quality. They do actually sound like hearing people when they speak. However, it is important to realise that this new generation of DHH students still experiences negative consequences related to not being able to perceive the full spectrum of auditory information and relying (partly) upon visual information in communication or instruction at school (Knoors & Marschark, 2014). For this generation of DHH students, it is also very important for them to share their experiences and challenges of growing up being deaf in a hearing world. Many of their challenges are related to the hearing loss itself or to a mismatch between being deaf and the demands of a predominantly hearing society, but not to personal failure *per se*.

In our co-enrolment programme, we support DHH students in the discovery of their identities. We support them in developing a positive and realistic self-image. As most parents of DHH children are hearing (and not intimately connected to the Deaf community), the trait of deafness is generally not part of DHH children's vertical identity. To stimulate children's formation of a horizontal identity, which incorporates their trait of deafness, DHH peer- and adult role models are present, and a program for the development of cultural identity within the framework of a bilingual programme is used.

3.1 Attention to linguistic identity

We stimulate the formation of a linguistic identity, because language is the roadmap of a culture, as it symbolically represents a culture's art, knowledge, norms, and values. As previously mentioned, it is not easy to create a linguistic identity for DHH students in a mainstream school. A co-enrolment programme offers the possibility to include more DHH students in one school. With more DHH students, the development of a linguistic identity is attainable. But enrolling more than one DHH student in the classroom is by itself no guarantee that the deaf students will develop a linguistic identity. Our co-enrolment programme is explicitly a bilingual programme. This means that the two languages, SLN and spoken and written Dutch are anchored in the educational programme.

DHH students attend sign language classes in their educational programme. They learn sign language as a school subject taught by a DHH sign language teacher. Doing so, they follow (parts of) the national curriculum for deaf

education. SLN is also used as a language in instruction. The teacher of the deaf uses SLN in specific situations (when some additional individual instruction is needed for concepts e.g. during history of math) and the SLN interpreters translate classroom instruction. Hearing students also have the option to take sign language courses in an extra-curricular voluntary programme. SLN is not part of the Dutch curriculum for hearing students.

As SLN is used as an object language and as an instructional language, DHH children's skills in SLN are assessed each year through the administration of the T-NGT test-battery (Hermans et al., 2009). The T-NGT is a norm-referenced instrument that assesses DHH children's receptive and productive phonological, lexical-semantic and morphosyntactic skills in SLN for children between 4 and 12 years old. Table 1 shows the results of the DHH children on four linguistic domains in four successive school years. Note that the children's raw test scores are transformed into z-scores which indicate their level of proficiency in SLN in standard deviations in comparison to DHH children of the same age in bilingual education programmes in special schools for DHH children. Positive values indicate above-average skills, negative values indicate below-average skills.

Domain	T1	T2	T3	T4
Receptive vocabulary	+0,41 *	+0,71 **	+0,70 **	+0,88 **
Expressive vocabulary	+0,14 *	+0,33 *	-0,06 *	+0,42 **
Receptive morphosyntaxis	+0,30 *	+0,12 *	+0,39 *	+0,20 *
Expressive morphosyntaxis	+0,75 *	+0,41 *	+0,68 **	+1,08 **

Table 1. DHH children's z-scores scores on the T-NGT on four linguistic domains of SLN (receptive vocabulary, expressive vocabulary, receptive morphosyntaxis, and expressive morphosyntaxis) in four successive school years (2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017).

T-tests (criterion 0, the average of DHH children in bilingual education programmes at special schools) revealed that DHH children in the co-enrolment programme scored the same ($p > .1$ *) or even better ($p < .05$ **) than their DHH children of the same age in special schools for DHH children. These results suggest that the co-enrolment programme has indeed succeeded in stimulating DHH children's linguistic skills and thus their linguistic identity as the UNCRPD requires.

3.2 Attention to cultural identity

Teaching sign language and the availability of sign language as a language of instruction are important factors for stimulating a linguistic identity. But it is not enough to develop the linguistic identity being a deaf person while neglecting their cultural identity. This cultural identity could be seen

as a component of the student's overall personal identity. The language one uses is only part of one's identity. Thus, of course DHH students and hearing students need to become aware of the presence of the two languages and of ways how to make use of these two languages in varied contexts, but they also need to acquire other aspects of their identity being a deaf person. Therefore, we give attention to the cultural identity of DHH students and treat it as an integral part of the curriculum. It is part of the weekly schedule. The general aim of the cultural identity programme CIDS (see De Klerk et al., 2015) is to stimulate the development of a positive and realistic self-image. The course offers knowledge and insight and makes students aware of their (multicultural) identity as DHH persons in a society that mainly consists of hearing people. It offers opportunities for contact and for sharing experiences with other DHH students, youngsters and adults. It creates opportunities for alliances with hard-of-hearing, deaf and hearing people, all with the aim of enhancing the welfare and wellbeing of DHH students. The deaf sign language teacher addresses issues that are related to their DHH identity and Deaf culture. For example, they look at and discuss artistic expressions of deaf persons and they talk about deaf history. There is also room to examine being deaf or hard-of-hearing in a predominantly hearing world. There are not always solutions for the challenges DHH students may encounter in a hearing world, however, the discussion of challenges can help DHH students to become aware of these issues and how to deal with them.

The following domains are part of the CIDS programme:

- **Citizenship:** Knowledge and skills to participate actively as a DHH person in society;
- **Communication:** Knowledge and skills to communicate with acquaintances and strangers;
- **History:** Knowledge of the history of Deaf people in the Netherlands and worldwide;
- **Personal identity:** Knowledge and skills to develop a positive self-image and a personal identity;
- **Tools and techniques:** Specific DHH and general knowledge as well as the skills to use them;
- **Arts, sports, culture and leisure time:** Knowledge about specific forms of arts and culture for DHH people and options for sports and leisure time.

4 Maximise academic and social development

To maximise academic and social development, several interventions have been incorporated in the co-enrolment programme. For instance, access to communication and classroom instruction is maximised by the availability of SLN or Sign Supported Dutch (SSD) as respectively the

language or communication mode of instruction. In every classroom with DHH students, SLN interpreters are present. The teacher of the deaf who is present for several moments a week in every classroom uses SSD or SLN depending on the needs of the DHH students. When they teach the whole class, they use spoken Dutch and the interpreter uses SLN. Mainstream teachers also follow a sign language course. Furthermore, all mainstream teachers use FM equipment to maximise access to spoken Dutch. Most DHH students make use of both languages of instruction. The amount in which they use one or the other language depends on their individual needs and preferences as well as on the acoustic circumstances. Basically, DHH students are free to choose their language of instruction. However, for DHH children in kindergarten the teacher is more decisive in this process.

To increase DHH and hearing children's access to and comprehension of the curriculum, DHH and hearing students can follow pre-teaching lessons to prepare them for the general classroom lesson. Pre-teaching is aimed at a better access to the general classroom instruction. Concepts and vocabulary are explained beforehand. There is also the possibility for re-teaching when more rehearsal or explanation is necessary. The two teachers, the mainstream teacher and the teacher of the deaf, carefully plan their schedule to meet the educational needs of all students involved.

4.1 Academic achievement

The academic development of all students has been monitored carefully for several years. An unambiguous interpretation of the achievements of DHH children, for instance their average scores on mathematics, is always difficult for two different reasons. First, DHH children tend to fall behind their hearing peers. Secondly, as educational placement of DHH children in the Netherlands is guided by a broad range of (cognitive) skills (nonverbal intelligence, language proficiency, social skills), achievements of DHH children in different educational contexts cannot easily be compared. In the Netherlands, children's school achievement is usually assessed through tests that classify children's achievements into one of five categories: I: good (percentile scores 81-100), II: above average (percentile scores 61-80), III: average (percentile scores 41-60), IV: below average (percentile scores 21-40), V: weak (percentile scores 1-20). Thus, in the normative sample of monolingual and multilingual hearing children each category includes 20% of the children. Table 2 shows DHH children's school achievements in word decoding, reading comprehension, spelling and mathematics.

Domain	I (Good)	II (Above average)	III (Average)	IV (Below average)	V (Poor)
Word decoding	8.7 %	17.4 %	26.1 %	13.0 %	34.8 %
Reading Comprehension	6.7 %	13.3 %	6.7 %	6.7 %	66.7 %
Spelling	13.0 %	8.7 %	17.4 %	13.0 %	47.8 %
Mathematics	4.3 %	13.0 %	8.7 %	17.4 %	56.5 %

Table 2. The percentages of DHH children in the five achievement categories (word decoding, reading comprehension, spelling, and mathematics) in the school year 2016-2017.

As shown in table 2, more DHH children fall behind the achievements of their hearing peers, especially on reading comprehension and mathematics. To illustrate, two-third of the DHH children’s scores fall in category 5 (poor). But at the same time, 20% of the DHH scores are in the above-average (good or above-average) categories. Thus, when we look at the results we see a natural and large variation (largely from unknown sources) in achievement among DHH students and in achievements across different subjects.

4.2 Maximise social development

From a large base of research studies, it has become clear that DHH students who visit a mainstream school on their own more often experience problems with social acceptance and popularity (Stinson & Antia, 1999). The main reasons for these problems seem to be related to withdrawn behaviour and less-developed communicative skills (Wolters et al., 2011).

Through the presence of DHH peers and adults, the co-enrolment programme tries to tackle the increased risk of social problems for DHH children. When we initiated the co-enrolment programme in 2003, we assumed that the programme would strengthen DHH children’s social position in the classroom and increase their wellbeing at school. The programme provides plenty opportunities for intensive contact between DHH children and their hearing peers in an environment where they are not the only DHH children (Antia & Kreimeyer, 2003). In other words, our positive expectations regarding DHH children’s social functioning in co-enrolment programmes are founded in our expectation that DHH children will find support in the presence of DHH classmates. In addition, the mainstream school uses a programme to stimulate the social-emotional development of all children, which aims to enhance (DHH and hearing) children’s appreciation of differences between children. This aim of the programme fits well within the philosophy of the co-enrolment programme.

Since the start of the programme, DHH children's wellbeing and their social position have been assessed in our research programme. Already in the early stages of the programme implementation we found evidence for positive effects in the social domain (Wauters & Knoors, 2007). A recent study on DHH children's wellbeing in the co-enrolment programme revealed that their wellbeing at school was as good as or even better than hearing children's wellbeing (De Klerk et al., in press). To assess their social position, we have mainly used two sociometric tasks, the peer nomination task and the peer rating task, to assess children's social functioning. Over the years, we have consistently found that the social position of DHH children is significantly less positive than the social position of their hearing classmates. However, although these differences are consistently observed, the actual size of these differences is quite small. More importantly, we have also consistently found that DHH and hearing children have a preference for peers with the same hearing status. DHH children give more positive nominations to DHH peers than to hearing peers (and vice versa). This finding supports our assumption that DHH children do find support in the presence of other DHH children in their class. In other words, our studies on DHH children's wellbeing and social position have yielded predominantly positive results.

5 Conclusions

The current educational practice in the Netherlands is characterised by a system of various educational options in mainstream and special education for DHH students with diverse needs. The extent to which we really may speak of inclusive education in mainstream schools is subject for discussion. Often, DHH students are placed in a mainstream school on an individual basis. For some students, this may seem an appropriate option. They are included in a school close to their home environment. They do not need to travel long distances and grow up in school together with hearing peers from their neighbourhood. The question is whether they are really included in the sense that they are able to participate as well as their hearing peers, both in instructional and in social aspects of education. It is definitely difficult for them to develop a horizontal identity as a deaf person, certainly if they meet deaf children and adults neither in school nor in their lives outside school hours.

Our co-enrolment programme offers far better chances for full inclusion in comparison to mainstream programmes in which DHH children are individually enrolled, since it incorporates DHH peers and DHH staff, includes both spoken and sign language and values the culture of all students, including deaf culture. Unfortunately, because of the limited number of DHH students it is not possible to realise a co-enrolment programme in the vicinity of each and every DHH student's home. This is a disadvantage of the programme, since it still requires DHH students

to travel longer distances from home to school than their hearing peers. And the hearing peers at school often do not live close to the homes of the DHH students. Still, given the advantages of co-enrolment and the positive results we have obtained in our programme over the years, we feel that attending the programme is well worth the amount of time that DHH students need to travel to the school. The DHH students are prepared to a maximum extent for participation in the general society in a genuinely inclusive way. By organising inclusive education in the form of co-enrolment settings, while at the same time acknowledging the value of sign language and Deaf culture, inclusive education as promoted by the UNCRPD is possible for DHH students.

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Biographies

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3. Good practice examples at European and national levels

e) Spain

i. Centro Educativo Ponce de León: An inclusive education experience for deaf and hard of hearing pupils in Madrid, Spain

Montserrat Pérez García (Headmaster at Centro Ponce de León),
Ana Belén García de la Torre (Teacher at Centro Ponce de León),
Esther Herrero Benito (Teacher at Centro Ponce de León)

1 Background of the Centro Educativo Ponce de León

C.E. Ponce de León was initially devoted to teaching deaf students. In 1973, the centre was inaugurated as a private school in Villaverde district, in the community of Madrid. In 1977, it was taken over by Obra Social Caja Madrid, and in 2001, the Asociación de Gestión Docente y Cultural, part of the Montemadrid Foundation, took over its ownership and management.

Currently, the unique school organisation of C.E. Ponce de León is the result of years of experience dedicated to teaching and educating deaf pupils and students with other special needs, alongside a permanent self-evaluation of our educational practice in order to adapt to the changes that have occurred within this group of people. Our school not only follows general educational regulations, but it also focuses on the inclusion of learners with disabilities.

Our centre is subsidised by the Regional Government of Madrid.

2 Educational approaches and facilities

Without losing our identity, which is our dedication to the inclusion of deaf students, we have been transforming our centre throughout the years and, at present, it is configured into two educational approaches. While we utilise different educational systems, we have only one goal: inclusion. Our two educational approaches are as follows:

1. Ordinary education system with preferential inclusion of deaf students. The following are its corresponding educational stages, nearly all have several units:

- Preschool: for children from 3 to 6 years old;
- Primary school: from first until sixth grade of primary school;

- Secondary school: from first to fourth grade of secondary school;
- Medium level vocational studies in Digital PrePress: first and second grade for students over 16 years old;
- High level vocational studies in Communicative Mediation: first and second grade for students over 18 years old.

2. Special education system focused on deaf students with speech impairments and/or physical/psychological disorders. The following are its corresponding educational stages:

- Obligatory Basic Education: for students from 6 to 16-18 years old;
- Transition to adulthood programme: for students from 16-20 years old;
- Professional Programmes: for students with additional disabilities. We have several units within the following professional profiles:
 - Ancillary activities in greenhouses, gardens and gardening centres;
 - Ancillary operations in assembly of electrical installations and building telecommunications;
 - Ancillary services in beauty centres.
- An occupational centre authorised by the Department of Family and Social Affairs of the Community of Madrid which can attend to up to 75 students (half of whom are hard of hearing and have a mental disability);
- A Special Employment Centre: a printing workhouse, which has seven employees, five of whom have a disability.

The Educational Centre has 417 students. Of these, 99 students are deaf or hard of hearing. Included in the 99 are 49 who have other disabilities besides deafness, and 14 students have other special needs but are not deaf or hard of hearing. 52 students have a mental disability and the remaining 252 students have no disabilities.

The centre is located in the south of Madrid. Our students come from the nearby neighbourhoods and from other areas in the community of Madrid. The latter are the ones with special educational needs.

Most of our students' families have a mid-low or low socioeconomic level. More than 40% of them are living in some kind of disadvantaged situation (e.g. ethnic minorities, different nationalities, difficulties and irregularities in previous schooling, and other social, economic, or cultural factors). Our aim is to mitigate these social inequalities from the beginning, to fulfil our educational purpose and to follow our philosophy, which is to make deaf students feel like any other learner. This is ensured by enabling them to share classrooms and activities with hearing students, which is a core feature of the daily functioning of our facilities.

What we offer is education for deaf and hearing students within an inclusive environment, which has turned our school into a reference for students with functional diversity.

The Educational Centre, as mentioned above, started a “complex transformation process focused on improving and innovation which has no end.” Indeed, the constant analysis and improvement in our work with deaf students with the purpose of improving the quality of education that they receive, “could be considered as a never-ending story” (Simón et al., 2016).

This transformation started in 2004, when the preschool and the primary school were progressively incorporated in the ordinary education system while keeping preferential inclusion of deaf students. The Special Education system and secondary education already existed. Quickly, the objectives of this inclusive system were spread to all educational stages. From 2004, in collaboration with the Special Aural Disability Team from the Community of Madrid, a combined bilingual educational programme, was launched at preschool and, later, at primary school level.

We embed our priorities throughout our work, with the curriculum, in the methodology we use and in the organisation of teaching activities. Our aim is that all students, regardless of their needs or capacities, have access to learning. As highlighted above, our goal is inclusion. That is why it is essential to work together in the same classroom, sharing the same space and follow the same activities, forming respectful, tolerant, and supportive people in the process.

3 Inclusive considerations within Centro Educativo Ponce de León

There are a number of considerations, which permeate our transformation and are at the basis of our reflections. In order to achieve our goal of providing inclusive education for deaf learners, our project is based on two pillars of inclusion:

- Bilingual education in oral Spanish and Spanish Sign Language (S.O.L.-S.S.L.);
- Classroom organisation and commitment to our educational approach.

3.1 Bilingual education

Bilingualism with regards to deaf people is not only a recommendation, but a need. In every country there are bilingual people and bilingual communities. In all of these communities live deaf people who use sign language and learn the spoken/written language of their country as well, because they consider being competent in both languages to be a requirement for their full social inclusion into the hearing society.

In the case of deaf students, it is not a personal choice but a real need for their complete inclusion into society. Inclusion must be achieved without diminishing the language, in this case, sign language that enables the individual to grow up and learn in a more natural way, which creates a sense of identity. This is evidence for the necessity of creating bilingual educational contexts for deaf children. Furthermore, we must also take into account the advantages of bilingualism for hearing students, as it also supports their full development.

Our school includes, in its educational project, the particularity of being a bilingual school where all our students, whether they are deaf or hearing, learn in Spanish and S.S.L. Both languages are present in every classroom, all the time. This project is carried out thanks to the commitment of the entire educational community to use both languages.

3.2 Classroom organisation and educational approach

3.2.1 Two teachers per classroom

In order to address the issue of diversity in our school, we opted for a classroom organisation different from the one that can usually be found in other schools.

In the model we created, which was inspired by other existing models (Rodríguez, 2005; Domínguez & Alonso, 2004), we decided to regularly include a second teacher in the classroom, so that every class (from preschool until primary levels) has two main teachers. In secondary school, there is a teacher and a S.S.L. interpreter in every classroom.

Our teachers have the required qualification according to the Spanish Ministry of Education for the different educational stages they teach in. This way, there are nursery teachers, primary teachers as well as English, music or physical education specialist teachers. In higher stages, depending on the subject they teach, our teachers have master degrees in language and literature, English philology, music, biology, mathematics, or other subjects. They also have Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) B2 level certificates in S.S.L., required in order to teach

as a Sign Language model teacher in nursery school. For primary school they need to be interpreters in S.S.L.

Considered to be as essential as teachers, we have sign language experts: deaf people fully proficient in teaching sign language. For these employees, having a degree in teaching or higher studies in communicative mediation is advisable as well. Within the school's annual planning, we also include sign language courses to improve the level of all our professionals in this language.

The aim of having two teachers per classroom is to offer the opportunity to attend to all our different students in a broad and flexible way while ensuring quality, according to the model of bilingualism that we propose in our educational project. Thus, in every classroom, we include a teacher who teaches in Spanish language ("the one who speaks") and another teacher who teaches in S.S.L. ("the one who signs"). Both teachers are equal in their responsibilities. There is not a head teacher and a support teacher to help them, but two head teachers, who manage the entire educational process of both hearing and deaf students. Their simultaneous presence in the classroom is based on previous collaborative work on the educational programme. It is the real collaboration between the two teachers which makes it possible for all students to be together in the same classroom, discovering their diversity and learning according to their capacities and needs.

Furthermore, the teachers are not alone. They collaborate with other experts, who are essential for achieving an adequate educational response that caters to everyone. For instance, there is a sign language teacher, a signing deaf professional. Their task is to encourage the acquisition of and competence in sign language of all students. They also serve as a role model for deaf students, apart from developing and taking part in different activities throughout the school day. They work one hour per day with each class in preschool and primary school. They also organise other activities, for example, telling tales in S.S.L. in the school library.

We continue creating a tailored educational approach to each student, as we call it in our centre, meaning that we adapt our education to each student, whether they have a disability or not.

3.2.2 Flexible groups

This model facilitates organising learning activities in different group sizes. We organise activities in big groups, where all students take part in the teaching at the same time and receive the same learning content in both languages simultaneously. At other occasions, we prefer to separate students in groups of four or six deaf and hearing pupils, which allows

us to encourage communication and cooperation among all students, in addition to having the opportunity to work more closely with each of them. Sometimes, we also decide to work individually with one particular student or a pair of students to explain content more thoroughly.

Most of the time, these different groups of students are created within the classroom, but occasionally we decide to take a student or a small group out of the classroom so that we can work on specific learning elements, which would be impossible to tackle if they were in the classroom. The purpose of these groups is to support the students who need it with specific learning processes and necessary strategies to enable them to go back to the classroom and join the rest of their classmates in the same explanation or activity.

These flexible groups are established by the teachers, as they are the ones who know the needs of their students best and can adapt the school curriculum and support teaching tasks as they see fit.

3.3 Use of flexible methodologies

Some objectives of our methodology are: autonomy, a sense of achievement, the feeling of being competitive, learning motivation, establishing a connection between learning at school and real life, creating collaborative opportunities to build up knowledge, and increasing social abilities. These methodological objectives are linked to the need of having students who are competent in both languages in our centre.

Next, we will comment on the two basic pillars of our methodology, which makes everything we have shown above possible.

3.3.1 Research projects

We start from the idea that knowledge is best acquired if a link is established between information that the student already possesses and learning how that information connects to his or her life. Thanks to this methodology, students become the protagonists of their own learning processes, which encourages them to learn and, is also easily integrated into their cognitive structure (e.g. a preference of visual learning over auditory learning). They also must acquire meaningful knowledge, which builds upon pre-existing knowledge. In this methodology, didactic materials are aimed at stimulating and developing physical, affective, intellectual, and social abilities in students. We adapt the materials and activities to what the curriculum demands at each educational stage while trying to ensure that they are easily available and interesting for our pupils. We also use a lot of visual materials to support this process. Additionally, new technologies constitute yet another tool that can foster their development.

3.3.2 Areas and corners as an educational response to diversity contexts

Classrooms are distributed into corners in preschool and areas in primary school. There, pupils are free to decide what they want to learn first or experiment with, which objects to manipulate, etc. This is a methodological approach that enables active participation of students in acquiring knowledge. It is the students who decide where to go to start learning and what subject or which activity they will do throughout the day.

This methodology has a double benefit. On the one hand, it allows students with more learning difficulties to enjoy more opportunities to communicate and to share their solutions while learning how to overcome problems. In a big group, it is more embarrassing for students to raise their hands and to be exposed in front of all their classmates. However, in a small group, students feel more confident to express their ideas, ask for help and collaborate in doing assignments.

At the beginning of the class, each classroom creates their four working areas, which are given a name that represents a common motivation and clearly identifies what students are going to learn in the area. In three out of four areas, students work on an online research project of their own choosing involving the subjects language and mathematics. The fourth area, depending on the student's age and the needs of each group (autonomy, learning pace, etc.) can be devoted to art or ICT (e.g., digital boards, tablets, PC).

We dedicate four hours per week to working in these areas. In each of these sessions, four different activities corresponding to each area are proposed. Students choose, at the beginning of the lesson, the area they want to work in on that day. The only condition is that they must go through the four areas during the week. This way, the student can choose what they prefer to learn on every single day. We all feel like doing different activities depending on the day. The goal of this distribution is to respect those changes in the student's mood.

Every area includes activities with different levels of difficulty or complexity, so that every student feels free to choose the one which best fits their individual development. This way, we allow the student to self-regulate until they feel able to choose the option that best fits their needs at that moment.

3.4 The role of the teacher in the areas

This methodology not only implies a change in the classroom distribution, but also a transformation in the way we see education and of our attitude towards students. Teachers go to the different areas, based on the teaching programme they have previously prepared. This is where they will be sitting in order to attend to the students' needs. Thanks to this distribution, there may be teachers who help students and students who help other students. This way, support is given to the students who need it, not only outside of the classroom, but also inside of it, which allows us to give a better and more adjusted response to the students' learning needs and interests.

Flexibility is a basic characteristic of all our teachers. They can easily adapt to the different situations in the classroom and show an active listening attitude towards any proposal the students may have. Teachers work "for" the students in the classrooms. This is why the teacher must have the capacity to change criteria or to attend to the needs of the students that may arise every day in class.

Thanks to our methodology, teachers can adapt themselves to the students, to their different pace of learning and to their personal characteristics, becoming an efficient support for all the students who need them. Additionally, teachers are in charge of coordinating, regulating and controlling the timing in every area.

This method allows us, as mentioned above, to work in a more tailored way with those students who need more support. It supports an open attitude towards the different needs of students so as to find the best and most dynamic approaches to improve the learning process.

Our teachers become facilitators, encouragers, and supervisors of tasks, providing students with positive, adequate, functional, and meaningful learning contexts, which promote individual learning through discovery. To achieve this, it is vital for teachers to work in groups, which requires constant self-evaluation of our role as teachers. The teacher is an essential element in this task. They need to analyse their daily work to obtain the best results.

4 Language teaching methodology

In order to offer our students rich language contexts, we have created a project in which we combine oral language and sign language in a shared and inclusive education environment, where English language learning is also included.

These two characteristics allow both languages (oral language and sign language) to be present at all times at school. They are ways to learn and they are also part of the curriculum. We have reflected on when and how to use the two languages in the classroom and have come to the following conclusions:

When to use each language:

- You cannot learn two languages at the simultaneously;
- A language is learned by “doing things” with it, by interacting with peers or adults;
- Each teacher must keep their role (sign language or oral language) within the classroom to avoid adjusting too much to what we may think the child is able to understand;
- We increase the moments when deaf children are exposed to oral language by using cued speech;
- There are three levels of intervention: big groups, small groups, and individual teaching (depending on the needs of each student).

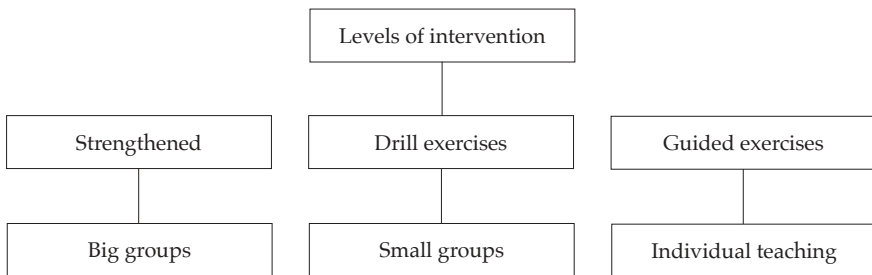


Table 1: Levels of intervention at Centro Educativo Ponce de León.

When teaching English, our teachers also have to organise different groups and strategies in order to teach this language properly according to the students’ needs and their individual capacities depending on their age and their hearing.

In nursery and primary school, we have two English teachers who work together when teaching classes. There are moments when the two teachers work at the same level in the classroom and moments in which one of the teachers takes the role of a language assistant in conversation.

The deaf students who are admitted into the English lesson are those who have a communication system (sign language or oral language). If we receive a new student who has no previous communication system, then English lessons are substituted with individual sign language lessons until they have acquired a way to communicate. Once they have acquired a communication system, the student is taught English, usually through routine activities in the big group. If these students are in primary school, they will be with other classmates who have similar characteristics and similar abilities to lip-read, in order to learn the new foreign language. English teachers use various resources in the classroom such as a digital whiteboard which is a very useful visual tool. PCs are used in specific moments to support or clarify explanations. We also use FM devices with deaf students to help them hear oral information more clearly.

In nursery school, we have two hours of English a week: one hour with a language assistant, who is in the class with one of the head teachers, and one hour to work on routine activities, assemblies, news, songs, etc. in the big group. The next session is dedicated specifically to work on aspects related to the curriculum. These activities are organised in different corners inside the classroom. Here, we have the language assistant in the class to help students speak.

In the primary school, there are three hours of English a week, one hour of which is with the language assistant in the classroom. The grouping of deaf students depends on their abilities, as in nursery, and the same resources are used.

5 Vocational education for deaf students in our school

Our school offers deaf students the opportunity to enrol in vocational studies in an inclusive environment within ordinary education or in special education.

Within ordinary education, we offer vocational studies courses (intermediate level). In these courses, deaf students share the classroom and learning with hearing students. They access the explanations by means of an interpreter in S.S.L., who interprets the whole lesson into sign alongside the speaking teacher. In addition, all teachers have excellent knowledge of S.S.L.

There is another vocational course, which higher-level hearing or deaf students can enrol in to learn communicative mediation. All teachers in this course are proficient in sign language. The teaching of S.S.L. language is part of the curriculum as well.

As part of our special education programme, we offer a special “Programme to Adult Life” to those deaf 16-20 year-old-students who also have other disabilities. Its main goal is to teach students how to live in an autonomous and independent way in their daily lives. After finishing this course, students move to an occupational centre, where most users have different disabilities, mainly mental disabilities, in addition to being deaf. In our occupational centre, there are 53 users, 25 of whom are deaf. Our occupational centre is unique in Spain because it is the only one that is specialised in teaching deaf learners.

In this same field of special education, there is also another education offer: professional programmes for students between the ages of 16 and 21 who have not finished their secondary studies. In this case, the course is aimed at students with additional disabilities, apart from being deaf. After doing this course, they can access a higher level of vocational studies (intermediate level) after passing an entrance exam, or they can start their working life or get into an occupational centre.

6 Project assessment carried out in our school

One of the main efforts in our school is the continuous revision and innovation of our teaching-learning processes in order to offer all our students a high-quality education. In striving to achieve this, we have taken part in different assessment processes, both internal and external.

First, we will comment on the results of an internal assessment, which we carried out for three years. Then, we will comment on the most remarkable results of the evaluations that were carried out by external institutions in our centre.

6.1 Internal Assessment – Phase 1

We have conducted three inventories to assess our students’ development throughout the three school years, taking into account several aspects in their development: social relationships, oral language acquisition, and sign language acquisition.

The main purpose of these inventories is to obtain quantitative details on our students’ evolution within the bilingual project. Obviously, we could see students develop throughout the years in nursery and primary education, but we did not have written information and details to support our theories.

Taking into consideration that our school is bilingual (Spanish oral language and S.S.L.), we were interested, firstly, in knowing if our students (deaf and hearing) were adequately learning both languages throughout the school day. One of the characteristics of our school is to provide the same education to deaf and hearing students, which helps them improve their social relationships. According to this, we wanted to know how this shared learning experience also improved their social competencies.

To study these outcomes, we followed our students' progress over a three-year time frame to collect all the information related to our pupils and to compare the findings.

First, we analysed the new pupils, those who came to our school when they were 3 years old and started their learning process in a bilingual context. Secondly, we chose a group of pupils in their 4th year of primary school, as they were the first ones to learn within this bilingual context throughout all their school years. This way, we would collect information of the first three years at school and the final three years in primary school.

Regarding the instruments used to evaluate communicative competences in oral and sign language, mentioned above, we used inventories created by one of our counsellors in 2004-2005 in another research project. However, we added and changed some elements to adapt the inventories to our school needs and to obtain more precise results.

In this research project, we collected the opinions and perceptions from our teachers about the different communicative competences of our students regarding vocabulary, morphology, and syntax in oral language and specific aspects of sign language, such as the use of space, sign configuration, and communicative uses of the language.

To start the inventory, we analysed several standardised tests, but the most valuable was BLOC¹⁰⁶ (Puyuelo, 1998). To analyse sign language usage, we used the inventory for a global evaluation of the main linguistic competences of S.S.L. by Ardura et al. (2016). In order to evaluate the social competences of our students, we developed another inventory, which included the assessment our teachers completed on the quality and quantity of our students' social relationships. To analyse these aspects, we used standardised assessment materials. Here, we used the Battelle Development Inventory (personal/social area) and the Socialisation Tests (BAS). In addition, we included some items from the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002).

106 BLOC (Bateria del lenguaje objetiva y criterial) is a battery of language evaluation tests for pupils between the age of 5 and 14.

6.1.1 Results

6.1.1.1 Communicative and social competences acquisition in nursery school pupils

We can affirm that the social competences of our pupils improved a lot over the years until they were able to obtain quite high results.

As far as sign language knowledge is concerned, we observed that understanding is achieved faster than producing, as is the norm in any language acquisition. This is evident when speaking about deaf pupils who are learning the oral language at the same time and have no other way of communication. A more exhaustive review of these results can be consulted in Ardura et al. (2014).

In oral language acquisition, both in comprehension and production, the best results are achieved at the end of the schooling period. Logically, the marks obtained by deaf and hearing students are different, since hearing students are using their mother tongue, whereas deaf students have to learn it at the same time they learn sign language. We must also take into consideration their hearing impairment, which affects reception and production of speech.

6.1.1.2 Communicative and social competences acquisition in primary education pupils

We observed improvements in all aspects we have assessed, both in nursery and primary students (deaf and hearing). Since changes in nursery school pupils were evident and very fast, changes in primary school are slower. This is logical, as during a long schooling period in a bilingual context, all significant changes take place in the first stages.

6.2. Internal Assessment – Phase 2

We selected a group of participants for the research. We decide to include only the pupils in their first year of nursery education to start our analysis. At the end of the research, we had information from deaf students throughout three school years and from a significant number of 9 hearing pupils selected at random.

One of the educational options for deaf pupils in the Community of Madrid are bilingual contexts, where deaf and hearing students share the same teaching-learning process in order to create communication links and learning of two languages: oral Spanish language and S.S.L. However, currently, there are very few studies on the acquisition of communicative competences in S.S.L.

The assessment we did included a three-year time period analysis of deaf and hearing pupils in the Centro Educativo Ponce de León, while they were studying in nursery school. The goal was to assess the acquisition of different elements of sign language (vocabulary, morphology and syntax). Those pupils shared the same classroom and the same learning conditions within a bilingual context.

The results demonstrate that bilingual educational contexts enable the equal acquisition of sign language by deaf and hearing students of the same age. This shows that the development of each linguistic competence assessed in hearing and deaf students is very similar. Some groups have a higher level in understanding than in production. Also, we found that changes in understanding competences are visible before we see the changes in production. The results show that in both deaf and hearing groups, the competences that are more easily acquired are the ones related to vocabulary and syntax, whereas morphological competences are acquired later.

6.3 External assessment

6.3.1 Community of Madrid CDI test result

The Community of Madrid carried out external evaluations of all the students in their third and sixth years of primary school regarding knowledge and indispensable skills. It should be noted that the results reflect the composition of the groups, and as a rule we are equal to the average of all the centres of the Community of Madrid. Sometimes they are one point above or below the average depending on the academic courses. However, deaf students who took the test had the same average results as the centre.

6.3.2 Participation in a research project on the socio-emotional development of deaf children, and the factors involved in this development¹⁰⁷

Deaf students aged 6 to 12 years were evaluated regarding aspects linking to the understanding and interpretation of emotions, beliefs and desires in oneself and others as well as emotional regulation competences. In addition, we explored the factors that could be favouring the development of emotional competences. We summarise, briefly, some of the most important conclusions:

- The results showed that there is a certain gap in the socio-affective

107 This research was carried out by Aranzazu Ardura, professor of U. Autónoma de Madrid throughout the academic year 2006-2007.

- development of deaf children;
- A certain level of basic language acquisition, both in Spanish and in S.S.L, is fundamental for socio-emotional development, but it is not sufficient;
- However, it seems that higher order linguistic competences and the styles of affective socialisation in which the deaf child develops are most important in the development of their socio-emotional competences.

All these results were published in a larger work by Ardura et al. (2008), which can be consulted for a more extensive understanding of the results.

6.3.3 Evaluation and results of the teaching-learning process of the written language in the Bilingual Project¹⁰⁸

During the academic years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011, an evaluation was carried out for second and sixth grade primary education students, not only to determine their reading levels, but also to obtain information about the strategies being used by our students (deaf and hearing) to read and write. In summary, some of the most important results were the following:

- The reading levels of the hearing students are within the levels expected for their grade;
- The results of the deaf students are somewhat below average, but there is a significant improvement compared to previous research undertaken within Centro Educativo Ponce de León. The group of deaf students with cochlear implants (CI) reaches very similar (and even, sometimes, higher) scores than their hearing classmates;
- It seems that profoundly deaf students who have little knowledge of oral language use semantic strategies when reading. This means that they select the keywords and use that information to “guess” the content of the message. However, this strategy is very costly when reading more complicated texts, requiring additional work on fundamentally improving, their morphological and grammatical strategies.

108 This research was carried out by Ana Belén Domínguez, professor of the University of Salamanca.

6.3.4. Evaluation of deaf students in nursery school with early cochlear implants in bilingual context¹⁰⁹

In this research, five students of our centre participated. Different aspects of the deaf children that were considered essential for a global development from a psychological point of view were evaluated. In this regard, the team designed a battery of tests to evaluate competences in oral language, sign language, socio-emotional development and written language. At the moment, we only have the results of the evaluation that was carried out in the first course, so it is only a start that will have to be compared to later analyses.

- Oral Language: we compared the results of deaf learners with a CI with the results of hearing students of the same age. The results were within the expected for hearing pupils of that age;
- Sign language: we compared the results of deaf students, who were exposed to sign language at the same age at which evaluated hearing students had been exposed to spoken language. The results are very positive;
- Socio-Emotional Development: our deaf students got high marks both in their social adaptation evaluation and in the tests that evaluate the recognition of emotions in themselves and in others;
- Written language: in this respect, only aspects of reading have been valued so far: the text orientation, the distinction between drawing and writing, the title and author identification, the functionality of the different types of text, etc. were examined. In this sense, it is observed that our deaf students have a good management of these basic elements.

6.3.5. Research on reading skills¹¹⁰

Throughout the academic year 2017-2018, data has been collected regarding several deaf primary and secondary school students. Later, the data will be analysed to produce results and possible proposals for improvement.

7 Conclusion and outlook

We are proud of our educational project since we have achieved our main goal: inclusion. All our students, hearing and deaf, learn and develop their capabilities together. To achieve this, our school has had to discuss the

109 This research was carried out by Marian Valmaseda and Mar Pérez of the Specific Auditory Disability Team of the C.A.M. (2009-10 and 2010-11).

110 This research was carried out by Ana Belén Domínguez in the academic year 2012/2013.

right methodology and the best languages to communicate and learn in, as well as how to enhance inclusion. Thanks to this, all of our teachers work together as a team whose main interest are the students.

Another positive aspect of our methodology is that deaf students are included in every class as equals, which contributes to a more harmonious and balanced development. In order to achieve the basic pillars of inclusion, which are presence, participation and learning, our bet was bilingualism (spoken language - sign language) and a methodology based on research projects and corners group work in the class.

Following our methodology, we have been working since 2008 in combined systems: ordinary education with special education. Some of our students, due to their needs, were changed to a special education class after a discussion between the school and the parents and, if applicable, the student (depending on their age), but their group of reference was still the one that they had been in since they were three years old. Therefore, we try to find moments to share learning, participation and being together in these areas. Depending on the students' individual needs, the combined programme may vary, from using class corners, physical education lessons, or workshops, etc.

After checking the numerous benefits that our methodology has provided our students, we created a new combined programme: five-year-old children learn with others from the first grade of primary school, or pupils from the sixth grade of primary school learn together with students from the first grade of secondary school. In these combined programmes, we work on mathematics and language skills. This teaching system facilitates the exchange of pupils within the different stages. It also makes it possible to share experiences among teachers and to create a space where students can socialise, cooperate in groups, and share their capacities and competences so as to have the opportunity to ask for and offer help spontaneously.

Bilingualism enables communication and learning naturally, without barriers, allowing each student to use the language they feel more comfortable with. In addition, our methodological approach allows us to teach pupils to gain autonomy, to feel self-confident and to take part in all activities and daily life at school. We also have the opportunity to attend to pupils individually in the case where they may need it.

This way of working give us the opportunity to pass on our values, teaching our students that diversity is enriching because we can all learn from others and live together.

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Biographies

Montserrat Perez García is the headmaster of the Centro Educativo Ponce de León, where she has been directing the bilingual inclusive education project for deaf and hearing learners from its creation in 2004 until today.

Ana Belén García de la Torre is a teacher who has been involved in the bilingual inclusive education project of the Centro Educativo Ponce de León for more than 10 years. In the beginning, she coordinated the implementation of the project at primary school level. Currently, she is head of studies for the secondary education department.

Esther Herrero Benito is a teacher who has been involved in the bilingual project of the Centro Educativo Ponce de León for more than 10 years. She was involved in coordinating the implementation of its bilingual inclusive education project for deaf and hearing learners in the preschool and later in the primary school. At present, she is head of studies and teacher of a special education classroom, in which she carries out a project of combined education between the classroom of special education and the classroom of five-year-old pupils in preschool.

The series

The EU's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2010 means that there is now an obligation to implement the enshrined rights in a timely manner. Its legal implications have been widely discussed at an institutional level. As a result, it has become evident that this is a new and complex area where international, European and national political responsibilities overlap.

This publication aims to provide possible interpretations of the UNCRPD with regards to its implementation for deaf citizens, including sign language users and hard of hearing people. Each contribution in the series will explore a specific UNCRPD article, from both an academic and best practice perspective, and at all levels, from European to regional.

Article 24: Education

This fourth book in the series addresses Article 24. Education is explored from various angles, including the importance of and legal foundations for bilingual education for deaf learners in Europe, interpreter use in inclusive education, the need for early sign language access, and the accessibility of teacher training. It also presents good practice examples, highlighting the diversity of settings in Europe that provide accessible bilingual quality education.

Professionals from various disciplines have contributed to this volume. Their backgrounds span from academia and NGO work to education provision and sign language interpretation. They explore how learning environments must be designed to be accessible for deaf learners, especially sign language users, to maximise their academic and social development, as enshrined in Article 24. Thus, this book aims to support its implementation for deaf learners in the best way possible.



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