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Modern Trends in Working with Hearing Impaired Children: World Experience

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ABSTRACT

Education opportunities for deaf children have changed considerably since the introduction of early diagnosis through newborn hearing screening and the developing technologies, such as implantable devices and digital hearing aids. This study sought the views of parents of deaf children across Europe to describe the educational services their child receives and to explore their experiences of these services.

Keywords:

Hearing impaired children, deaf, method, questionnaire, result

Introduction

The views and experiences of parents provided valuable information on the education services for deaf children in Europe. Their insights lead us to make recommendations to *widen the availability* of¹:

- Up-to-date and accessible information for parents and those working with deaf children
- Training for mainstream teachers to understand deafness and its impact on learning
- Training for teachers on supporting the individual learning needs of deaf children
- Resources to support the use of technology and improve classroom acoustics
- Training to maintain and develop the knowledge and skills of specialist professionals
- Resources to support pragmatic, higher level language needs

Materials And Methods

Educational opportunities for deaf children have been changed significantly by the introduction of newborn hearing screening and

the development of hearing technology (Archbold & Mayer, 2012; De Raeve, Baerts, Colleye, & Croux, 2012)².

Early diagnosis and intervention with implantable devices or digital hearing aids give deaf children access to useful hearing and provide the opportunity to develop language and communication skills within the range of their hearing peers (Moeller, 2000; Uziel et al., 2007b; Yoshinaga-Itano, Sedey, Coulter, & Mehl, 1998).

Results And Discussion

Responses to the online survey were received from 231 participants from 20 countries across Europe. Of these, 6 parents responded with regards to 2 children, therefore these responses were analysed separately bringing the total responses related to 237 children.

Countries represented included Austria (2), Belgium (1), Bosnia & Herzegovina (2), Bulgaria (1), Czech Republic (4), Denmark (7), Estonia (8), Finland (14), Hungary (3), Ireland

¹ Antia, S. D., Jones, P. B., Reed, S., & Kreimeyer, K. H. (2019). Academic Status and Progress of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students in General Education Classrooms. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*.

² Archbold, S. (in press). Being a deaf student: changes in characteristics and needs. . In M. Marschark & H. Knoors (Eds.), *A Changing World for Deaf Learners*. . New York: Oxford University Press.

(2), Italy (11), Lithuania (26), Luxembourg (1), The Netherlands (1), Poland (1), Portugal (4), Serbia (1), Spain (17), Sweden (66) and United Kingdom (65).

In the UK (65 respondents), 68% attended a mainstream school. 72% are happy with the support their child receives in the classroom; even though only 60% of these receive extra support. Of those who are not happy with the support (28%), only 10% report that they do not receive extra support; in other words, 18% of respondents receive support in class, but are not happy with it.

In Finland (14 respondents), all the children had severe or profound losses and the majority were in mainstream school (65%). Very few of these children received additional or specialist support from a teacher of the deaf or speech and language therapist; however 85% were happy with the level of support their child received. All these children used CI, with 10 reporting that their child used a FM aid. Extra support appears to have been available when required and 4 respondents commented that they had received help when their child was younger.

In Lithuania (26 respondents), 50% received no support from a specialist teacher, while 56% (14) received specialist speech and language therapy. 14 out of 20 respondents (70%) felt their child did not get enough support in the classroom.

In Sweden, (64 respondents), 25 reported that they received no specialist teaching support from a teacher of the deaf and 29 did not receive specialist speech and language therapy. 31% said they were not happy with the support their child receives in class. 57% are happy with the support they receive, even though 28% say they do not receive extra support in class.

Despite some good provision, many families report dissatisfaction with the services available to their child³:

“it’s a bit hit and miss” (133, UK)

“There are huge differences in Sweden with help and support...in school”(66, Sweden)

“the services are poor and haphazard depending on who the visiting Teacher for the Deaf is”(159, UK)

“Very good support from educational services, but did involve moving schools” (48, Spain)

“the professionals were of widely varying quality” (149, UK)

“I’d like the level of support he receives to continue at 6th Form college”(132, UK)

Conclusion

The views and experiences of parents provide very valuable information on the educational services for deaf children in Europe. Their insight leads us to make recommendations to widen the availability of:

- Up-to-date and accessible information for parents and those working with deaf children
- Training for mainstream teachers to understand deafness and its impact on learning
- Training for teachers on supporting the individual learning needs of deaf children
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³ Mukari, S., Ling, L., & Ghani, H. (2017). Education Performance of Pediatric Cochlear Implant Recipients in

Mainstream Classes. *International Journal of Pediatric Otorhinolaryngology*, 71, 231-240.

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