

## Chapter 5

# Inclusion and Exclusion: Global Challenges Within Deaf Education

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### ABSTRACT

*In this chapter, the authors explore the practice of inclusion as it relates to the education of deaf and hard of hearing (d/hh) students. Using the current situation in Jamaica as a microcosm, it is argued that for this specific population of students it may be necessary to reframe and redefine the notion of inclusion more broadly. For example, the authors argue that as a result of the specific cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of d/hh students, a more traditional approach to inclusion may in fact result in isolation and less access to content and skills. Inclusion that considers how deaf education classrooms may include accessible language, the Deaf community, families of d/hh children, and Deaf role models may be more appropriate for this population.*

### INTRODUCTION

Though inclusive education is increasingly the preferred model for special education in many developed countries, the education of deaf and hard of hearing (d/hh) children presents unique challenges for the inclusive approach. The literal definition of inclusive education is the incorporation of students with disabilities into the general education setting with appropriate accommodations, though the intentions of inclusivity are not limited to simply the physical addition of children with disabilities to the classroom. Instead, the intentions are to meaningfully including children both academically and socially in the classroom environment (see Komesaroff & McLean, 2006, for a discussion of the inadequacies of inclusion

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experiences for d/hh students that do not account for linguistic, cultural, and social needs). Research has shown positive outcomes in many instances for both students with disabilities and those without as the result of inclusive approaches to education (Freeman & Alkin, 2000; Peterson & Hittie, 2010).

As a result of the changes in instructional service delivery and educational placement, many students with a hearing loss are more frequently integrated into general education school learning communities, taught the same curriculum as their hearing peers by general education teachers, and receive special education services from an itinerant teacher. This is in contrast to going to a resource room, being placed in a self-contained deaf education classroom, or attending a special school for students who are deaf<sup>1</sup> (Anderson & Arnoldi, 2011; Antia, Jones, Reed, & Kreimeyer, 2009; Antia, Kreimeyer, & Reed, 2010; Bullard, 2003; Foster & Cue, 2009; Hyde & Power, 2003; Luckner, 2010; Reed, Antia, & Kreimeyer, 2008). Similar changes in service delivery options for d/hh students have occurred in Canada (Akamatsu, Mayer, & Hardy-Braz, 2008), the United Kingdom (Powers, 2002), and Australia (Power & Leigh, 1998). As explained by Miller (2008), “the itinerant model [of deaf education] is the predominant model nationally, even internationally” (p. 211). However, d/hh students may not have the same positive experiences in inclusive settings compared to their hearing peers with disabilities.

The inclusive education of d/hh students in general education settings is complex because it often requires students to work across differences in language, culture, and disability. D/hh children who are placed into a general education environment may find themselves the only d/hh child in the class, with no peers who know how to successfully communicate with them. This may be especially true for d/hh children who communicate primarily using a sign language. First, there is the difficulty of locating skilled interpreters who have sufficient background knowledge in the content areas for which they are interpreting. This is especially important in classes conveying advanced academic concepts. In addition, there is also the social and academic impact on communication in the classroom between the d/hh children and their peers and teacher, when neither the teacher nor classroom peers know sign language and the interpreter may have insufficient skills to ensure clear and consistent communication between all parties (Schick, Williams, & Kupermintz, 2005). Without a direct line of communication between the children and their teachers and peers, misunderstandings and complications may arise.

Issues of language and culture may be the most salient, but they are certainly not the only barriers to providing a meaningful inclusive educational experience for d/hh children. From an international perspective, some cultures have entrenched beliefs about disability that may limit the social inclusion of students physically included in mainstream general education classrooms (Danseco, 1997; UNICEF, 2013). As a result, in some cases inclusive education for d/hh children may meet the literal requirements for inclusion but not the underlying intention.

This chapter will explore the concept of inclusion, and potential limitations for inclusion for d/hh children – especially those in under-resourced countries. Specifically, this chapter will focus on the context of Jamaica which, in particular, has a history of belief that having a child with a disability may be a punishment for sin or wrongdoing, and children born with disabilities may be hidden away from their community (Miller, 2005). Such beliefs may result in fewer available opportunities for people with disabilities and in perceptions that teaching people with disabilities is an unattractive career option. Under-resourced countries like Jamaica, by definition, have less access to supplies and capital, which may also pose a challenge when locating appropriate materials or adequately trained teachers of d/hh students. In addition, this chapter will discuss the challenges of inclusive education for d/hh students within Jamaica and explore how schools for the deaf in Jamaica may be reimagined to be inclusive in

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