

Deaf children and Research: developing a model of good practice and participation

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In 2005 the ERSC research centre for Deafness, Cognition and Language (DCAL) <http://www.dcal.ucl.ac.uk/> based between UCL and City University London was set up. The centre planned to carry out several large scale research projects, many of which would involve deaf children. Developmental research at the centre is led by Gary Morgan (Professor of Psychology and DCAL Deputy director). At that time Gary Morgan discussed with Dr. Tyrone Woolfe (DCAL researcher now at the NDCS) and Robin Ashe (Frank Barnes now at the Birmingham Deaf Culture Centre) how research and education could link up more. With this challenge in mind Gary Morgan and Karen Simpson, (Headteacher of Frank Barnes School) decided to collaborate on developing a formal agreement between Frank Barnes School and DCAL to ensure a better overlap between DCAL's and the school's needs. They organised a research seminar with other colleagues who work in deafness research and a group of educators and the agreement was presented in its draft format. Subsequently Karen Simpson liaised with Dr Ruth Swanwick (Senior Lecturer in Deaf Education), who works directly in education research with deaf children at University of Leeds and also with Heads of Schools and Services within the Sign Bilingual Consortium (SBC) in order to finalise the agreement.

The aim was to develop a framework which would enable collaborative relationships between researchers and educators in order to promote the educational achievements and well being of deaf children. Schools were being faced with an increasing demand for research, which needed to be balanced against the schools capacity to deliver the project and interruption to their pupils' education. In the current research climate Universities in order to secure funding were and still are being asked to provide clear plans for how users of research would benefit from proposed research applications. In our case this involved deaf children's learning and quality of life. This change in attitude is now firmly on the agenda as researchers in deafness are looking to how their findings can relate to education and learning (Marschark & Hauser, 2008).

This protocol would include guidance for schools and researchers on how to lead effective and relevant research projects that would provide schools with useful information to improve deaf children's progress and support school improvement planning. It would also provide criteria against which schools

could assess the relevance of each research project and their school's improvement priorities. It would also ensure that researchers were obliged to sign up to the requirements of the agreement and most importantly agree feedback mechanisms so that the outcomes were shared with staff and then implemented by the school.

The final model of good practice and participation agreement was adopted by the SBC at their last meeting in September 2008. The British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD) have agreed to host the agreement on the BATOD website called "Good Practice in Research".

<http://www.batod.org.uk/index.php?id=/articles/research/good-practice.htm>

The SBC and DCAL welcome other Heads of Deaf Schools and Services to utilise the agreement if they feel it will be of relevance to their provision. Potentially the agreement could support other educational organisations if they liaised with Universities that carry out research projects in their field.

References

Marschark, M. & Hauser, P. (2008). Deaf cognition: foundations and outcomes. Oxford University Press.