



**Seeing Through New Eyes –
Deafhood Pedagogies and the
Unrecognised Curriculum**

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2. Historical Perspectives (i)

This presentation is normally 90 minutes. So cutting it back is a big challenge !

- 250 years of Deaf education, many philosophies and methods tried.
- Some say ‘Everything has been tried’.
- But one still remains unexplored – Deaf educators’ own pedagogies !
- Thousands of books and articles have been written. But not one book on Deaf pedagogies !
- A few articles and dissertations in English since the 1990s, but that’s all.
- What exists in your own languages ? Do let me know 😊

3. Historical Perspectives (ii)

- This example alone shows how intensively Deaf education has been colonised.
- After 250 years, Deaf childrens' academic results are still unsatisfactory.
- So how valid is the award of 'qualified teacher of the Deaf' ?!
- Poor results are still explained by blaming : deafness itself / parents / children / sign languages.
- Yet Deaf educators can only become qualified by following 'hearing' criteria.
- Our research suggests that Deaf education systems should be 'turned upside down'
– **Deaf educators' values and practices should form the basis for qualifications.**

4. Background to Research Project

- Observing Deaf classrooms, interviewing Deaf educators in UK and USA 2003 to 2005, follow-up in 2014/5.
- Supervising Goncalves' (2010) study in Brazil.
- Hearing teacher Donna West was co-researcher. Her knowledge of hearing education and her commitment to Deaf children (West 2012) was essential.
- Results are (slowly) being written up for this book :



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6. Findings (i)

Deaf educators' aims/motivations - different from hearing educators' :

- They know the **quality of Deaf community life depends on the quality of Deaf education.**
- This is a **cyclical** process – teaching the children to play their parts in ensuring a better life for their community – and to carry that forward for the next generations.
- They use **Deaf cultural values and strategies** in their teaching.
- Hearing who teach hearing do the **same**. But hearing teaching Deaf – don't know their value and strategies.
- They teach positive Deaf identities and strategies to use in the 'hearing world' .
- There seem to be 6 'layers' to this process, based on a concept of **cultural holism.**

7. Findings (ii)

- Deaf educators operate from **cultural intuition**.
- Little discussion between Deaf educators – no Deaf staff meetings and no national conferences.
- So their achievements have **not** been **consciously** recognised by Deaf educators themselves.
- But their work is superb. It is really an **Unrecognised Curriculum**.
- Some hearing teachers **do** use some of these teaching strategies.

8. The 6 'Layers' of Deaf Pedagogies

Cultural holism means that each layer overlaps.

1. Developing children's 'cognitive engines'.
2. Teaching awareness of modalities (Visual, Gestural, Tactile).
3. Creating 'Safe Deaf Spaces'.
4. Accelerating language development.
5. Identifying Deaf peoples' 'place' in the world.
6. Teaching children how to live well in both Deaf and hearing 'worlds'.

9. Developing 'Cognitive Engines' - ages 0 – 5

- **Basic concept – to activate cognitive processes : -**
- Most crucial - attention-getting strategies.
- 'Pulling the light cord'.
- Explaining basic concepts – names, relationships.
- Emphasising cause and effect.
- Promoting / modelling thinking skills.

10. Appreciating Modalities – ages 0 -5

- Appreciation of visuality and facial expressions.
- Appreciation of tactility/physicality.
- Appreciation of spatiality – larger ‘frame’ within which sign language occurs.

11. Creating Safe Deaf Spaces - all ages

- Applies to all ages, but **especially important in early years.**
- Classroom as ‘Deaf space’ where children can be their **Deaf** selves.
- Safe and freed to express themselves.
- ‘Warm up/warm down’ strategies.
- Treat each child **as individual** – vary language registers and psychologies.
- Importance of eye contact and the ‘wide-angle lens’.

12. Accelerating Language Development

- ages 7- 11

Language crucial for all ages, of course, but there is acceleration at this age.

- Process is ‘natural’, visual (‘like fish in water’).
- Crucial multi-level role of stories and ‘micro-stories’ (for extra information / creating empathy etc.)
- Importance of performance via demonstration. ‘We learn *together*’.
- Principle of ‘BSL/ASL first, English later’.
- Some teach children to appreciate basic sign linguistics.
- Creative sign and playing with language.

13. Explaining Deaf Peoples' Place in The Worlds - ages 5 - 11

- Explain concept of Deaf identity.
- Explain concept of 'Hearing'.
- Explain existence of 'two worlds'.
- Initial explanations of 'Deaf community', and Deaf as 'family'.
- Bring Deaf people into school, plus encourage out of school activities.
- First stages of 'Deaf Studies'.
- First stages of 'Deaf Culture' awareness.

14. Teaching how to live in Deaf and Hearing Worlds - ages 7 – 18

- Moral guidance.
- Discipline, Bluntness and Encouragement.
- Deaf wisdom ('Deaf-smart').
- 'Think for Yourselves' and 'Work Together'.
- Deaf children have Rights.
- Counselling and problem-solving.
- 'Information' and 'Relevance' as key concepts.

15. More examples of Cultural Holism

(i)

- So far we identified 84 Deaf values, skills and strategies. Some examples already given. Others :
- Believe all Deaf people - adults and children - have **equal value.**
- **High expectations. Hard work required !**
Urgency is a key concept too.
- Encourage introspection.
- Encourage support ('teach-each-other').

16. More Examples of Cultural Holism

(ii)

- Flexibility / improvisation skills.
- Quickly adjust to each child's needs **at same time as** keeping class attention.
- 'Deaf Classroom Time' - different from hearing education – sometimes information requires extra repetition time, sometimes very fast indeed.
- Use of drama / performance skills.
- Importance of Deaf Humour.

17. Tasks To Be Done.

- Merge these findings with other literature.
- Create framework for the 6 layers and 84+ values / skills / strategies !
- Identify problems prevent recognising Deafhood Pedagogies.
- History of Deaf educators – focus most : France, UK, USA.
- Identify parallels with other minority pedagogies (especially Maori / African American/Native American)

18. Other Important Points

- **Don't romanticise Deaf teachers** – not equally motivated or skilled !
- Recognise 'weaknesses' in Deaf cultures – are Deaf teachers aware of the extra needs of Deaf ethnic minorities ? Do they know Deaf history / sociology etc ??
- Recognise that ex-mainstreamed Deaf teachers have limited understanding of Deaf cultural values and skills.
- Deaf may think they know all about Deaf culture. But Deafhood awareness must be taught and studied.
- **'Deafhood Pedagogies' as core for training of teachers, hearing and d/Deaf.**
- Other 'Deaf Pedagogies' that need studying are : Youth work, Counselling, Mental Health work, SL teaching, College teaching etc etc.

19. 'Global Deafhood' and Deafhood Pedagogies

- Perhaps the most exciting aspects of the research are :
- The findings do not conflict with existing research. So :
- Deaf educators in different countries use similar strategies **with little or no contact with each other !**
- Must be careful in generalising, but some degree of 'global Deafhood' seems to exist...
- How might this be important, not only for Deaf Studies, but for the world ??

20. Thank you for watching !

Email feedback,
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