

# Education of the Deaf in Australia and Norway: A Comparative Study of the Interpretations and Applications of Inclusion

Merv Hyde, Stein Erik Ohna, Oddvar Hjulstadt

American Annals of the Deaf, Volume 150, Number 5, Winter 2005/2006, pp. 415-426 (Article)

Published by Gallaudet University Press
*DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/aad.2006.0004*

# EDUCATION OF THE DEAF IN AUSTRALIA AND NORWAY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE INTERPRETATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF INCLUSION

*INCLUSION* IS A TERM and process that is culturally, politically, medically, philosophically, and historically relative in its interpretations in the education of the deaf. The present study is a comparative analysis of two substantially different education systems for deaf students, those of Norway and Australia. The study objective was to elucidate the sources of some of these differences and to examine the interpretations and applications of inclusion that are inherent in the two countries' policies and practices, and in recent research evaluations. Significant differences exist in the national contexts and in the manner in which inclusion is understood and applied in Norway and Australia; the study reports on recent research examinations of inclusion in the two countries and finds that the transitions from policy to practice seem questionable.

**MERV HYDE, STEIN ERIK OHNA, AND ODDVAR HJULSTADT**

HYDE IS A PROFESSOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRE FOR APPLIED STUDIES IN DEAFNESS, FACULTY OF EDUCATION, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY, GOLD COAST, AUSTRALIA. HE WAS A VISITING PROFESSOR AT THE SKÅDALEN KOMPETANSESENTER, SLEMDAL, OSLO, NORWAY, IN MID-2003. OHNA IS A PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION AT THE STAVANGER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, STAVANGER, NORWAY, AND WAS A RESEARCH ASSOCIATE AT THE SKÅDALEN KOMPETANSESENTER. HJULSTADT IS A DOCTORAL CANDIDATE, DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL-NEEDS EDUCATION, FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF OSLO.

*Inclusion* is a term and process that is culturally, politically, medically, philosophically, and historically relative in its interpretations in education and in life. It is usually felt that schools and the education they provide should reflect the values and objectives of the society in which they are embedded, including, inter alia, preparation for students' future lives personally, socially, and vocationally. This can result in some schools or school systems adopting an organizational structure and practices for deaf students that are more "special" and separate, rather than placement in general classes under the "regular school" model that is considered by many to be a primary focus of the processes of inclusion (Hyde & Power, 2004; Luckner, 1999, 2001).

Some countries and their school systems see education for deaf students as different from regular education, particularly in the light of the philosophical, cultural, social, and linguistic perspectives they adopt regarding the status of "deafness" and sign language, and of "Deaf communities," including the recognition of characteristics of such communities (Bagga-Gupta, 2001; Johnston, 2004). They see schooling as only a part of a spectrum of inclusion experiences, in which home, family, child care, and a wide range of social encounters are equally, if not more, important. Therefore, schooling in such systems that is best

able to respond to the deaf student's special needs may still be segregated to some degree (Croyle, 2003). As such, these systems may continue to provide some separate or special education for deaf students to prepare them for a future life that is based on developing, in these systems' terms, a native sign language as a first language and a strong self-concept, or, in the words of some writers, "a Deaf identity" (Bat-Chava, 1993, 2000).

The process of instilling a Deaf identity can be seen in contrast to portrayals of the "school-for-all" position (Rosenqvist, & Gustavsson, 1993; S. Stainback, W. Stainback, & Forest, 1989), under which schooling, specifically the "general classes" model (Hyde & Power, 2003; Luckner, 1999), is viewed as an indivisible part of the overall inclusion process. Within the school-for-all philosophical approach, a single school or school system may be initially designed or subsequently accommodated to accept all students and to be tolerant of and responsive to their diversity and individual needs, because "it is simply the fair, ethical, and equitable thing to do" (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000, p. 23), or "because it is the right thing to do" (Winzer, 2000, p. 9). That is, deaf children should attend the local school they would have expected to attend had they not been deaf (Winzer, 2000). There are also some positions that attempt to bridge between the general classes model and the special school model, including the use of "coenrollment" or "coteaching" designs (Luckner, 1999; Stinson & Kluwin, 2003; Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996).

In summary, some clarification of the terms *integration*, *mainstreaming*, and *inclusion* is required, as these terms are used differently by researchers, commentators, and education authorities (Powers, 2002; Stinson & Antia, 1999). Foreman (2001) and Ashman and Elkins (2002) describe "integration" as referring to a student's attendance in a less segregated setting than a special school—which could include a special education class in a regular school or a regular class. "Mainstreamed" is described by Ashman and Elkins as meaning enrollment and participation in a regular class. Mainstreamed students may or may not be "included." "Inclusion" is often described as the outcome of a process whereby schools attempt to provide for the personal, social, and learning needs of all their students. Powers (1996), writing in England, declared that "inclusion is an attitude not a place," that students could be "integrated" without being "included," and that inclusion would need to "extend the scope of the ordinary school" (p. 37).

Decisions by states or other authorities about the nature of the educational services they provide for deaf students thus may be based on many factors, including the imperatives established by national curriculum statements, interpretations of research, experience, the relative dominance of various stakeholder groups in decision-making processes, cultural interpretations, financial factors, the demography of the deaf and hard of hearing population, medical and audiological descriptions of hearing loss, beliefs about the role of technology, and philosophical positions, particularly those involving the rights of children, parents, and minority groups.

We conducted an analysis of two substantially different education systems for deaf students, those of Norway and Australia, to elucidate the sources of some of these differences among systems and to examine the interpretations and applications of "inclusion" that are inherent in these systems' policies, practices, and evaluations. We hope that such an examination will further inform understanding of this term in current and future use.

## Description of the Two Systems

### Australia

Australia is a nation of six federated states and two territories in which each state or territory is responsible for its own education system, including matters of structure, policy, funding, curriculum, and practice.1 While there are agreed-upon "key learning areas" and "common goals for Australian schools" in the national curriculum statement, there are no set national curriculum statements, and limited direction to schools and school authorities concerning the nature of educational services for students with a hearing loss. The national government enacted a disability discrimination law in 1992, and each state has its own antidiscrimination legislation (proclaimed in the various states between 1978 and 1992). These laws are built around principles of social justice, including access, participation, and equity of outcome. They are designed to be largely educative and preventive in focus, but necessarily are protective of the rights of people with a disability or cultural difference against discrimination. Australia is required to comply with the United Nations International Convention on the Rights of the Child and has significant national and state policies in the area of multiculturalism, as well as a "national policy on languages" (Lo Bianco, 1987) that includes acknowledgment of Australian Sign Language (Auslan) as a community language and recognition of the status of the Deaf community.

Each state can therefore have somewhat different objectives, policies, systems, and practices reflected in its education systems, school structures, and curricula. However, these differ-

ences are not substantial, and usually relate to variations in grade sequence, school commencement age, curriculum outline, tertiary entrance assessment procedures, and the balance between independent and government schools.

Schools are organized into preschools (usually for 4-to-5-year-old children), primary schools (usually comprising seven grades, up to age 12 years) and secondary/high schools (usually comprising 5 grades, up to age 17 years). All these levels are free and compulsory in the state systems. Postsecondary options include technical/community colleges, universities, and private colleges. The proportion of private or independent schools varies from state to state in Australia, but in the special school or special education sector such schools are relatively few in number and usually limited to institutions supported by private associations, foundations, or church authorities. Some of these schools are dedicated to programs for deaf students.

Deaf students can participate at all levels in regular schools and postschool institutions, or may be enrolled in special schools or in special education units (with one or more separate classes) that are part of regular schools. Deaf students who are in special schools or special classes are usually those "ascertained" to have the greatest need of support, particularly regarding communication, or who may have an additional sensory, developmental, intellectual, or behavioral disability. Those in the regular school "units" for deaf students will usually be taught daily with other deaf children by teachers of the deaf, with opportunities to join regular classes where their capabilities are judged to allow. Those who are placed full-time in regular school classes receive varying levels of specialist support from itinerant teachers of the deaf and specialist aides. Such students usually will be the only deaf student in their school. There are also early intervention/preschool programs specifically for deaf students in each state.

The few independent programs for deaf students consist mainly of schools with an auditory-oral or auditory-verbal approach to communication and involving inclusion in regular classes, and those using Auslan in bilingual programs. This latter type has been established in recent years in most states for parents who wish their children to be instructed in Auslan, with English learned as a second (often only as a written) language. Typically, these are small programs and mostly involve deaf children of deaf parents, but also include some deaf students from hearing families and some hearing children from deaf families.

The establishment of some independent programs with a strict regime of auditory-verbal "therapy" for parents and deaf children has been a notable feature of postimplantation provision in many states. These programs generally impose a strict aural regime and do not accept the use of any signed communication at home or at school (see Power & Hyde, 1997, for a critique of such programs).

Currently, therefore, the state deaf units, or the very few remaining special schools for deaf students, use either a bilingual/bicultural program (Auslan/English) or Australasian Signed English, a sign system developed to represent the morphology of spoken English and presented by teachers in a Simultaneous Communication mode (Hyde & Power, 1991; Power, Hyde, & Leigh, 1996). Recent research has shown that the substantial majority of deaf and hard of hearing students (i.e., all Australian students with at least a moderate hearing loss as defined by Australian Hearing Services) in Australia are placed in regular classes. Hyde and Power (2003) found that across the states, 83% of these deaf and hard of hearing students were in orally communicating regular school classes, receiving some support from a visiting teacher of the deaf, according to their determined needs. (Further, 32% of these deaf students in regular placements were profoundly deaf, i.e., had an average better-ear hearing loss greater than 91 dB.) By world standards, 83% is considered a very high rate of placement in general classes (Fortnum, Marshall, Bamford, & Summerfield, 2002; Holden-Pitt & Diaz, 1998).

In summary, Australia's services for students with hearing loss are provided by individual states. The states develop policies and procedures that they believe respond to community expectations and are within their own philosophical and social interpretations of inclusion—a term that is currently described, with some variation, in the policies of these state authorities. These policies and procedures, while recognizing the cultural and linguistic characteristics of deafness, are largely directed at regular school placement and learning support in mainly auditory-oral communication settings.

## Norway

Norway's current ideology of inclusive education can be traced back to the 1960s, and best understood in the context of broader historical and social changes to the Norwegian welfare state (Flem & Keller, 2000; Vislie, 1995). The reorganization of special education began late in the 1960s, and equality, integration, normalization, participation, and decentralization were important principles of this process. New laws established the ideology of "integration" and what was called "adjusted" education. The Integration Act of 1975 incorporated a

1951 law relating to the provision of special schools, and specific regulations for the administration of special education were eliminated (Flem & Keller, 2000). In 1992, the former state schools for special education were redeveloped as a system of 20 regional resource centers. These centers arrange courses for parents and teachers and provide guidance and counseling; they are also involved in the assessment of students with special needs. The main objective of the centers is to support local services in municipalities and schools.

Since 1975, Norway's 435 municipalities have been responsible for the education of all students, who have the right to be educated in their local schools (Dalen, 1994). Sections 1–2 of the Education Act of 1998 emphasize "adjusted" education as a legal right for all students (KUF, 1998). As is explained in the national curriculum for compulsory education, "The compulsory school is based on the principle of one school for all. The compulsory school shall provide equitable and suitably adjusted education for everyone in a coordinated system of schooling based on the same curriculum" (KUF, 1996, p. 56). Adjusted education is further explained as follows: "All pupils, including those with special difficulties or special abilities in certain areas, must be given challenges corresponding to their abilities. If all pupils are to receive schooling of equal value, individual adaptation is essential" (KUF, 1996, p. 58). The Education Act of 1998 introduced a requirement for 10 years of compulsory education. Students attend primary and secondary school in the course of these 10 years (from ages 6 to 15 years); students who have completed compulsory education have the right to 3 years of full-time upper secondary education. Postsecondary schooling (vocational and higher education) is available at four universities and a range of colleges.

The national discussion of integration and inclusion focused on the concept of "the student's own environment." Two opposite interpretations were highlighted, one emphasizing the student's "own environment" as the local municipal school and the neighborhood as "home," the other emphasizing the student's "own environment" as a place where there was access to and participation with other (deaf) pupils and adults using Norwegian Sign Language (NSL).

Between 1992 and 1997, several national initiatives were taken that had a significant impact on the education of deaf students within a "school-for-all" concept. Students who had acquired NSL as their first language were given the right to education through the medium of sign language (sections 2–6 of the Education Act of 1998; KUF, 1998). Further, the national curriculum for the 10-year period of compulsory education (KUF, 1996) introduced four new syllabi for students educated according to sections 2–6: NSL, Norwegian for deaf pupils, English for deaf pupils, and drama and rhythmics for deaf pupils. The important difference between the three latter syllabi and the regular syllabi in Norwegian was that English and music, because they involved sound and speech, were replaced with suitably adapted signed forms (KUF, 1998).

With the introduction of these policies, other initiatives were taken to enhance the status and competence of NSL use in schools and in families with deaf children. To meet regular teachers' need for competence, a program in NSL was developed at some universities and colleges. According to sections 2–6 of the Education Act of 1998, teachers who are educating deaf students must have competence in NSL at a level equivalent to a half-year of full-time study. A similar program in sign language was established for hearing parents with deaf children. These parents are entitled to 40 weeks of training in NSL through the first 16 years of their child's life.

While the legislation gives all students in Norway the right to attend a school in their neighborhood (Skarbrevik, 2001), it also gives deaf students the right to be educated in NSL. The student's level of hearing impairment, whether moderate, severe, or profound, does not have any impact on the legal right to education under sections 2–6 of the Education Act of 1998. However, deaf students do not have a legal right to education within a school for the deaf. When, in 1992, the former state schools for special education were redeveloped as regional resource centers, they were given three primary roles: (a) offering long-term and short-term education for groups of deaf children, based on a bilingual approach; (b) offering on-campus and off-campus consultative services for local educational institutions with deaf and hard of hearing students; and (c) offering programs in NSL for hearing parents with deaf children.

In summary, the education of deaf students in Norway has become more complex in recent decades. First, the education of deaf students is influenced by national policies, national curricula, and changing practices in education in general. Second, when deaf students enter regular municipal schools, their legal right to access to NSL must be supported. The regional resource center for deaf students is required to cooperate with municipal schools in offering education and professional development in and about NSL. Students following the national syllabi for the deaf have to relate to two different schools: the local municipal

school and the school at a resource center for deaf students.

During the 2001–2002 school year, there were nearly 350 students in compulsory education (ages 6–16 years) following the syllabi for the deaf in Norway. Approximately one third of these students were being educated in their local municipal school, which means that they may have belonged to a class in which they were the only student using NSL. The remaining two thirds were being educated at special schools or classes for deaf students, either within a regular municipal school or at a resource center for students with hearing loss. There are, of course, other students with hearing loss in regular classes in municipal schools who communicate in auditory-oral modes and receive some learning and communication support, but not normally from teachers of the deaf. The number of these students is significantly less than the number of students following the syllabi for the deaf. When a student is educated according to the syllabi for the deaf, the school receives additional teacher resources to accommodate the need for communication by means of NSL. These resources can be used to provide two teachers for a classroom or to reduce the student-teacher ratio to ensure a smaller class size. These decisions are made at the regional and school levels on the basis of regional and local traditions, values, and objectives.

## Two Recent Studies of Inclusion in Practice: Australia and Norway

### Australia

To investigate the work of itinerant teachers of the deaf and the characteristics of the students they supported in regular schools, a questionnaire was constructed that consisted of three sections: one on the teachers' training and experience, one on the characteristics of their work as itinerant teachers, and one that attempted to build a picture of a "sample" student who was receiving support from an itinerant teacher. Various findings from this large study are reported in Hyde and Power (2003, 2004) and Power and Hyde (2002, 2003). Only findings regarding the students' "participation" in regular schools are reported in the present study, as these findings best reflect the issues examined in the present analysis.

The study showed that a significant majority (83%) of deaf students in Australia attended regular schools and were placed in regular classes. There would seem to be evidence of a rising level of hearing loss among the population of deaf students being placed in regular classes in Australia. Among these deaf students in regular placements, hearing loss was moderate (41–70 dB) in 30%, severe (71–90 dB) in 32%, and profound (greater than 90 dB) in 32%. It has often been thought in Australia that children with profound hearing loss are mostly found in educational programs in special education units or schools for the deaf, so it is significant that just short of one third of the students reported to be receiving itinerant teachers' services in regular classes were in the profound hearing loss range and that, collectively, 64% of deaf students in regular classes had a severe or profound hearing loss.

There has been considerable debate over what constitutes successful integration of deaf and hard of hearing students in regular classes, but it has been argued that a main goal of an inclusion model is that it should involve social dimensions as well as dimensions of participation with hearing peers and classmates (for an overview, see Stinson & Antia, 1999). Others have argued that to be socially involved is insufficient without a high degree of competitive academic involvement, even though some deaf and hard of hearing people, when reflecting on their experiences of integrated schooling, have said that they often felt socially isolated, even if they were successful academically (Byrnes, Sigafoos, Rickards, & Brown, 2002; Gregory, Bishop, & Sheldon, 1995; Leigh, 1999).

If the Mirenda (1998) participation analysis procedure is applied (see Power & Hyde, 2002, for a description), student data from the study show that 81% of the students spent more than three quarters of their time in regular classes and were considered by their classroom teachers and the itinerant teachers to be in the placement that best met their needs. The considerable time not spent in their regular classes mainly involved their being withdrawn for specialist instruction, particularly by an itinerant teacher of the deaf. The data also show that 33% of the students were considered to be performing at a "competitive" level (Mirenda, 1998) academically when compared to their hearing peers, 14% were "active," and 17% were "involved" at only an academically minimal level. However, the data on the students' levels of independence and social participation present a different picture.

In contrast with academic competitiveness, as far as social integration is concerned only 33% of the Australian deaf students were regarded as well integrated with their hearing peers, with another 30% seen as "going along with" the school activities without playing a significant role in their planning and execution. Only 33% of the students were reported as being "completely independent" in the academic and social life in their classrooms, and 46% as being "independent with support." The long-standing concern about what constitutes "successful integration"—academic variables, social

variables, or both—was not resolved by these findings, but in any event they do not provide a compelling picture of a high level of social participation and independence of these students in regular school life.

Other variables reflecting on the characteristics of the students and their support needs show that the itinerant teachers spent considerable proportions of their time at the schools they visited in withdrawal instruction: 87% said they spent 6 or more hours each week in this mode with the deaf and hard of hearing students, with significantly more time spent with the profoundly deaf students and more time spent in consultation with their classroom teachers.

In summary, the data indicate high levels of satisfaction among both classroom and itinerant teachers' with the model of support being provided (although almost 25% of the teachers felt that the present placement did not best meet some students' needs), and satisfactory levels of academic achievement for the majority of students (even though, of course, many students needed to be withdrawn for considerable periods of time and 17% had only minimal academic involvement). However, the data on students' social participation and levels of independence run counter to this pattern of results, with a majority of students not being seen as completely independent or participating socially in an active manner.

In conclusion, the transition from policy to practice in regard to inclusion among Australian states remains questionable, particularly as research as produced no clear evidence regarding the efficacy of the outcomes of stated inclusion polices for the students themselves. In this context, it can be debated which outcomes are of relevance and what the priorities among such outcomes should be. The measures that are available of students' independence and participation in social and academic activities in schools (Hyde & Power, 2003; Power & Hyde, 2002) are determined from the perspectives of the schools and the teachers, and make assumptions about the factors that are considered to be most relevant to student "participation" and achievement. There would still seem to be a need to consider the actual experiences of students and the nature of their engagement within various school settings and curricula that are based on inclusion policies. Otherwise, one falls into the situation of being, in Powers's (2002) description, "politically correct" in policy terms, but still unable to present an effective context for deaf students' learning and development within broad social, academic, personal, and community environments.

## Norway

A recent Norwegian study, *På vei mot en ny grunnskoleopplæring for dove* [Toward a new compulsory education for deaf students] (Ohna et al., 2003), was part of the Norwegian Research Council's "Evaluation of Reform 97" project. The project was designed to "evaluate the introduction of the syllabi for deaf pupils," and at the same time to "evaluate the compulsory education of deaf pupils in a wider perspective" (Ohna et al., 2003, pp. 9–10). The main aim of the project was examine the different ways of organizing the education of deaf students across Norwegian municipalities, with an emphasis on language and modality use, communication interaction, and classroom contexts.

In the project, two researchers observed 10 classes in different schools across different grade levels, over a single week. Special schools for deaf students and local municipal schools were both included in the sample. The researchers used time-interval observations, field notes, interviews, and video recordings of interactive situations to develop an explorative description of everyday activities in classrooms where deaf pupils were educated according to sections 2–6 of the Education Act of 1998. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used. The quantitative analyses were based on interval observations of registers of teacher-student and student-student activity during specified time intervals; the qualitative analyses were based on researcher field notes and video recordings of interactions and language and communication modality use in the classrooms.

In the classes, two languages, Norwegian and NSL, were used in different situations for different purposes, as decided by the municipality. In the following paragraphs, we describe the structure of each of three classes—labeled A, B, and C—representative of the models presented by the municipalities. Our purpose is to illustrate some of the patterns of interaction observed in the classes—patterns that created constraints on language use and, subsequently, on learning.

In Class A, there were 15 students from the sixth and seventh grades. There were two teachers, both with formal competence in NSL. In Class B, there were 17 second-grade students. In this class there were also two teachers, one with formal competence in NSL. In Class C, there were 8 first graders and only one teacher, who had formal competence in NSL. In each of the three classes, there was 1 deaf student following the syllabi for the deaf.

In Class A, all students worked with their individual work plans most of the time. At the end of the week, the teachers inspected all the students' work, commented on it, and gave the students new work plans for the next

week. This lesson type can be summarized as a "desk-work lesson" (Sahlström, 1999) or "student-focused work lesson" (Bagga-Gupta, 2002). The teacher very rarely talked to the whole class in "plenary lessons" (Sahlström, 1999) or "teacher-guided lessons" (Bagga-Gupta, 2002).

The interval observations of the activities of the student who was following the syllabi for the deaf in Class A showed that this student's most frequent activity was working individually, as was the case for the rest of the class. But when the members of the class were working in groups or taking part in conversations with other students, the student following the syllabi for the deaf was most frequently getting help from the teacher or listening to and watching the teacher. Thus, activities involving interactions with the teacher constituted two of the three most frequent activities for the student following the syllabi for the deaf. When the rest of the students were working individually or in groups and at the same time were talking to each other informally in speech alone, the student following the syllabi for the deaf typically was working individually or talking with one of the teachers in sign alone. Very rarely did this student talk with other students. The activity category "conversation [with other students] during individual work" was rated the least frequently observed activity. There were only one or two registrations of this category during 8–10 hours of observation.

Through their communication and language use in this classroom, the teachers appeared to form two groups of students: one using Norwegian and one using NSL. When the language use in Class A was examined, the pattern showed a sharp demarcation between the use of NSL and the use of Norwegian. Observation of the languages used in the classroom in terms of their modality clearly showed a use of either sign alone or speech alone. When the teachers interacted with the student who was following the syllabi for the deaf, they always used sign alone. When the teachers interacted with the hearing students, they always used speech alone. The use of sign and speech simultaneously almost never occurred. One of the teachers explained that she felt that using sign and speech simultaneously "was not proper sign language."

As in Class A, there were two teachers in the second-grade class, Class B, but only one teacher with formal competence in NSL. Interval observations of the activities of all the students in Class B showed that the three most frequent student activities were (a) listening to the teacher, (b) answering questions and participating in discussion, and (c) working in groups (with other children).

When the "main" teacher talked to the class, she used speech alone. The second teacher (described as the "sign language teacher," the one with formal competence in NSL) simultaneously interpreted the other teacher's speech and the hearing students' speech into sign. The sign language teacher also interpreted from sign to speech, if the student following the syllabi for the deaf expressed something in sign alone. It is important to note that the intended role of the sign language teacher in the class was to teach, not to interpret.

Interval-period data registrations showed that in Class B there appeared to be opportunities for the student following the syllabi for the deaf to participate in classroom communication. However, through the analysis of the field notes and the video recordings, a revised picture of the interactions in the classroom appeared. In the field notes, there were registrations of situations in which the sign language teacher and the student following the syllabi for the deaf talked together, independent of what was going on between the classroom teacher and the rest of the students. The analysis of the video recordings of the plenary lessons showed that the deaf student often sought clarifications of the other teacher's communication from the signing teacher. These clarifications did not disturb the rest of the class, because the deaf student and the sign language teacher interacted in sign alone. In these situations, the classroom teacher and the rest of the class continued independently of what the deaf student and "her" teacher were discussing. In this way, the deaf student was often disengaged or constrained from interactions with the rest of the class. The analysis of interactions and language and modality use presented a picture of two parallel discourses in the classroom: one involving speech alone, and the other, sign alone.

In contrast to the other two classes, Class C, a first-grade class, had only one teacher. The three most frequent student activities, for the class as a whole, were (a) listening to the teacher (b) working individually, and (c) answering questions and participating in discussion.

In Class C, all students participated in common activities initiated by the teacher. According to the Sahlström (1999) lesson format categorization, the lesson type varied between plenary lessons and desk-work lessons. In plenary lessons, the teacher switched between using sign and speech simultaneously, when talking to the class as a whole, and using sign alone, when interacting with individual students. When the hearing students used speech alone, the teacher repeated what they said in sign and speech before she answered in sign with speech. The communication and language use

in Class C was thus characterized by a combination of different modalities: simultaneous sign and speech, sign alone, and speech alone. Most of the time, the teacher used sign and speech simultaneously. But the teacher and the students (both the deaf student and the hearing students) alternated among using sign alone, using sign and speech, and using speech alone, both in whole-class conversations and in student-to-student dialogue. Another characteristic of communication in Class C was that the teacher sometimes used sign alone when talking to the whole class in plenary lessons, and expected all students in the class to use sign when responding to her.

Examination of the communication interactions and of language and modality use indicated that the three classes presented different opportunities for student participation in classroom communication. In Class A, it was only the two teachers and the student following the syllabi for the deaf who used NSL. The hearing students were not expected to use NSL, and very rarely did so. When the teacher in Class A said it was "not proper sign language" when she used sign and speech simultaneously, she also created a barrier for the hearing students. In this way, the language boundary she created became an interactive barrier. In Class B, it was the division of communication between auditory and visual modalities that created the constraints on participation. When the teachers accepted that the student following the syllabi for the deaf and the "sign language teacher" had "clarifying" private interactions, parallel to the ongoing classroom interactions, they also put something at stake. Instead of making these clarifications part of the classroom discourse, they led the deaf student into a parallel discourse independent of what the rest of the class was doing.

In contrast to Classes A and B, Class C had only one teacher. In this class, the teacher used different modalities: sign and speech simultaneously, sign alone, and speech alone. There were two different teacher strategies that were important. First, the teacher sometimes used sign alone in plenary lessons when talking to all of the students, not only for the student following the syllabus for the deaf. In this way, the teacher signified that the use of NSL was an accepted strategy for interaction in the classroom. Second, when she used sign and speech simultaneously, the teacher diminished the boundary between the languages. In this form of interaction, the hearing students became less dependent on competence in NSL.

In conclusion, it can be asked if these approaches are consistent with bilingual education as it is formulated in Norway's national curriculum for compulsory education. Strictly speaking, the approaches observed in the present study are not consistent with the objectives of the new curriculum. If one takes all of the different aspects of the Norwegian school reform into consideration, the picture becomes even more ambiguous. Most teachers and parents who are involved in education of students following the syllabi for the deaf would agree that it is difficult to learn NSL within a municipal school: Access to NSL depends on participation in an environment with others who are using the language in diverse everyday situations. This was one of the main reasons for the change in Norway from state schools to regional resource centers for deaf students.

The study findings show how classroom contexts that were ostensibly designed by municipalities to promote inclusion as a process can elicit exclusionary experiences and communication outcomes for deaf students in schools. The analysis of the interactive patterns and of language use and modality in these three classrooms indicated that deaf students using NSL are exposed to some processes of exclusion from the classroom community in some of the classroom structures observed, especially in regard to gaining access to a common communicative classroom.

## Comparison of the Australian and Norwegian Systems

The Australian and Norwegian education systems are different in that Norway has a national system with specific legislation and a national school curriculum. Further, the specific place of Norwegian deaf students and of NSL in education is cited in national legislation, policy, and curriculum statements. Even the descriptions of deaf students—"students following the syllabi for the deaf"—reflects a focus on the curriculum and not on the student per se. In contrast to most policy in Australia, audiologic criteria are not used in "placement" considerations. The majority of Norwegian students with hearing loss are identified in this way and either placed in the regional resource center schools or in municipal schools with various structures and supports to respond to their NSL needs. A minority of deaf and hard of hearing students are placed full-time in regular classes with support only available through school and regional sources not specifically for deaf students.

Australia divests most responsibility for education policy, education legislation, and curriculum to its states (several of which have populations exceeding that of Norway). There are national curriculum guidelines, but they are neither mandatory nor elaborate. Auslan is incorporated into the

national policy on languages (Lo Bianco, 1987) and is acknowledged in state language policies.

However, assignment of responsibility for all schools and curricula to the individual states results in variations in how acceptance of Auslan plays out in policy and practice. Although all states have what are described as bilingual programs with instruction in Auslan, these are small programs for relatively few students. As a consequence of history, parent and community expectations, and, in particular, vigorous state policy interpretations of inclusion as meaning "general"/regular class placement, the great majority of deaf and hard of hearing students are in mainstream schools, with support from itinerant specialist teachers. While states' policies typically are framed around inclusion and describe ways in which schools can accommodate the diverse needs of learners (e.g., in an "inclusive curriculum"), these descriptions also suggest limitations of the process, and the "school-for-all" concept is not a current objective. Processes of ascertainment and appraisal continue to be used to determine "the needs" of students with hearing loss, and the recommendations of these processes result in decisions about levels of student and teacher support, funding and, to some extent, student "placement." Students' aided levels of hearing loss are considered, and it is of interest to note that in the Australian study we have described, this variable did not produce any significant effects on the academic or social performance of the deaf students observed in regular classes (nor was it considered as a factor in the Norwegian procedures).

Various states use the terms "deaf," "Deaf," and "hearing-impaired" to describe students in their schools, generically, culturally, or audiometrically. While there is no state with a separate or mandatory curriculum for deaf students, most states make some form of Deaf studies curriculum available to schools for both deaf and hearing students. These are directed at the study of Auslan, the Deaf community, and Deaf history, traditions, events, and values.

In Norway, about one third of the 350 deaf students follow syllabi for the deaf in regular classes on a full-time basis, and about two thirds in schools or classes for deaf students. The one third who are educated in regular classes receive short-term clustering arrangements at the resource centers for deaf students, as do their parents, to promote competence in NSL and to obtain access to social and linguistic networks. There are a small number of students with degrees of hearing loss in regular classes who do not fall under the provisions of sections 2–6 of the Education Act of 1998. The national curriculum, the supplementary curriculum for deaf students, emphasizes development of parent and teacher competence in NSL, and use of the resource centers to provide additional support to municipal schools. All of this is evidence of the formal transition of Norway's cultural and curricular model of inclusion from legislation to policy, and toward practice.

This is in contrast to the Australian situation, in which the typical experience for a deaf student will be to learn full-time in a regular local school, as the only deaf student in that school, receiving some weekly support from an itinerant teacher of the deaf, communicating in auditory-oral modes, effectively competing academically with hearing peers but not being as socially accepted. Contact with other deaf students or with Deaf communities is usually minimal and is not normally structured to occur through education. Access to Auslan interpreters for education is limited, though it is increasing. It is most frequently available in universities (and Australia has a high participation rate of deaf students in higher education), and increasingly in secondary schools, but rarely in primary schools. Findings of the Australian study suggest that access to Auslan interpreters would be an effective way for many deaf students in secondary schools and some primary schools to supplement the communication they receive from auditory-oral and print sources in regular classes.

There are also interesting methodological differences between the two studies described in the present article. These differences relate to the studies' designs (quantitative in the Australian study and qualitative in the Norwegian), the participants involved (itinerant teachers in the Australian study and teachers and deaf and hearing students in the Norwegian), the variables examined (e.g., student participation levels in the Australian study and patterns of communication and classroom activity in the Norwegian), and the school/class structures observed (143 regular classes, each with a single teacher, in the Australian study, and 10 classes in the Norwegian study, located either in the municipal schools or in a school at a resource center for deaf students).

These differences notwithstanding, there were some common outcomes from both studies concerning the inclusion of deaf students. In two of the class/teacher structures examined in the Norwegian study, there was evidence of parallel discourses and forms of communication exclusion of the deaf student from some of the communication events in the classroom. In the Australian study, the researchers concluded that while there was evidence of effective academic integration, there was limited evidence of social participation for the majority of the deaf students involved. In accor-

dance with most current definitions, inclusion could not be strongly claimed as an outcome or process in either study. There was also a divergence between the intentions of the countries' policies and the practices in the schools.

## Discussion—And Some Conclusions

Antia and Levine (2001) suggest that a major difficulty faced by children with a hearing loss is obtaining sufficient access to oral communication and the oral language of the hearing community, and that most deaf children will experience difficulty understanding spoken language. They also note that most hearing children have difficulty becoming sufficiently fluent in a sign language. Antia and Levine present the major challenges for inclusion as language differences, modality differences, and language competence. In their U.S. context, they observe that while most hearing students communicate in spoken English, many deaf students use American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary language, and that in a common school this creates barriers to shared communication, socialization, cooperative learning, and the building of relationships. Antia and Levine observe that modality differences occur because many deaf children, particularly those with profound hearing loss, do not readily acquire language through the auditory channel, and require access through a visual channel for access to English or ASL. In regard to ASL, they note that because of the low incidence of deafness, these children (particularly those with hearing parents) often lack access to a community of proficient signers in their experiences in school and out of school. As such, there are few opportunities for hearing and deaf children to share communication through a mutual language or modality, even though they may attend the same classes. It can be noted that the Norwegian and Australian studies described in the present article present some similar characteristics.

In a 1994 presentation, Antia (cited in Croyle, 2003) suggested that there was a need for specific strategies to engender socialization and cooperation between hearing and deaf children in classrooms through (a) reducing teacher-child interactions, (b) changing classroom activity to be more child centered and less teacher directed, (c) providing social skills intervention, (d) providing peer-mediated interventions, (e) providing peer orientation, and (f) increasing familiarity through intensive contact. There appear to be features in the operation of both the Norwegian and Australian systems that would benefit from these suggestions. As Kavale and Forness (2000) indicate, "Inclusion appears to be not something that simply happens but rather something that requires careful thought and preparation" (p. 287).

On another point, Antia and Levine (2001) note that the use of interpreters with young school-age children is not advisable, as "language is learned through interaction and exposure. The interpreter can only provide exposure, as the young child cannot be assumed to understand that the interpreter is functioning as the 'hands of the teacher'" (p. 371). This issue is a problematic one that may, in part, be addressed by the findings of the Norwegian study concerning the ability of the teacher in Class C to switch in seemingly discriminating ways between Norwegian and NSL in combinations of auditory and visual modalities to promote classroom discussion and better direct plenary teaching sessions.

There is evidence in these studies and the recommendations in other studies (e.g., Powers, 2002; Stinson & Kluwin, 2003) that different or at least more diversified models of inclusion in practice are needed for deaf students. These models could better reflect the heterogeneity of deaf students who are currently in general education classes, and more comprehensively encompass the needs of students who could benefit psychosocially, communicatively, and culturally from the use of sign language in regular classes. This is not necessarily to suggest a form of "exclusion," but a structure of inclusion that respects the retention of certain individual or group characteristics. Some commentators suggest that there is a need for humans to maintain some concepts of difference, and that these may strengthen the person's own sense of identity, distinctiveness, or competence (Rosenqvist & Gustavsson, 1993).

Even when inclusion is strongly supported by national or state policy, or even by legislation, as it appears to be in the countries reported upon in the present study, there is concern that, despite the nature of such legislation and policy, the observable practices or outcomes in schools can remain substantially unchanged, or demonstrate significant delays or difficulties in their implementation. As Sowell (1995) notes, policy issues can become subject to ideological debates that present conflicting visions or a "vision of the anointed" (p. 241) that can prevail over the views of others in determining policy. This is particularly true of visions that espouse "full" inclusion solely on the basis of moral and rights principles. We hope that the two-country comparison presented in the present article contributes further to shared understanding of the interpretations of inclusion and various ways in which it may be best achieved for deaf students. For, as Powers (2002) stresses, "there is an urgent need for teachers to develop a

shared language and understanding of what inclusion means at school and at the classroom level . . . beyond vague notions of greater participation in mainstream settings" (p. 230).

The present article commenced with the view that inclusion, as a term and a process, is culturally, politically, medically, philosophically, and historically relative in its interpretations. This would seem to be true in our two-country comparison. However, we suggest that there is also a personal or individual interpretation of inclusion. It involves the perceived outcomes and benefits of one's experiences and the degrees of acceptance, involvement, and sense of well-being these experiences generate. To discuss inclusion as a term, process, or philosophy that relates to groups of individuals with a common characteristic such as deafness may not be effective because of the influence of the diverse range of interindividual differences in the varied social and cultural circumstances in which deaf people live and learn.

## Note

1. Throughout the discussion of Australia in the present article, the term *state* is intended to comprise both states and territories.

## References


Antia, S. D., & Levine, L. M. (2001). Educating deaf and hearing children together: Confronting challenges of inclusion. In M. J. Guralnick (Ed.), *Early childhood inclusion: Focus on change*. Baltimore: Brookes.

Ashman, A., & Elkins, J. (Eds.). (2002). *Educating children with diverse abilities.* Sydney, Australia: Prentice Hall.

Bagga-Gupta, S. (2001). Diskursiva och teknologiska resurser på visuella "tvåspråkiga" pedagogiska arenor [Discursive and technological resources in visually "bilingual" pedagogical arenas]. *Utbildning och Demokrati*, *10*(1), 55–83.

Bagga-Gupta, S. (2002). *Vardagskommunikation, lärande och måluppfyllelse i tvåspråkiga regionala specialskolor* [Everyday interaction, learning, and appraisal in bilingual regional special schools]. Stockholm: Skolverket.

Bat-Chava, Y. (1993). Antecedents of self-esteem in deaf people: A metalinguistic review. *Rehabilitation Psychology, 38,* 221–234.

Bat-Chava, Y. (2000). Diversity of Deaf identities. *American Annals of the Deaf, 145,* 420–427.

Byrnes, L. J., Sigafoos, J., Rickards, F., & Brown, M. (2002). Inclusion of deaf students in government schools in New South Wales, Australia: Development and implementation of policy. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, *7,* 244–257.

Croyle, C. J. (2003). Inclusion of young children who are deaf and hard of hearing. In B. Bodner-Johnson & M. Sass-Lehrer (Eds.), *The young deaf and hard of hearing child: A family-centered approach to early education*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Dalen, M. (1994). *"Så langt det er mulig og faglig forsvarlig": Integrering av funksjonshemmede i grunnskolen* ["As far as it is possible and professionally acceptable": Integration of disabled students in compulsory school]. Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget.

Flem, A., & Keller, C. (2000). Inclusion in Norway: A study of ideology in practice. *European Journal of Special-Needs Education*, *5*(2), 188–205.

Foreman, P. (Ed.). (2001). *Integration and inclusion in action* (2nd ed.). Sydney, Australia: Harcourt.

Fortnum, H., Marshall, D. H., Bamford, J. M., & Summerfield, A. Q. (2002). Hearing-impaired children in the UK: Education setting and communication approach. *Deafness and Education International*, *4,* 123–141.

Gregory, S., Bishop, J., & Sheldon, L. (1995). *Deaf young people and their families: Developing understanding*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Holden-Pitt, L., & Diaz, J. A. (1998). Thirty years of the Annual Survey of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children and Youth: A glance over the decades. *American Annals of the Deaf*, *143*, 72–76.

Hyde, M. B., & Power, D. J. (1991). Teachers' use of simultaneous communication: Effect on signed and spoken components. *American Annals of the Deaf*, *136*, 381–387.

Hyde, M. B., & Power, D. J. (2003). Characteristics of deaf and hard of hearing students in Australian regular schools: Hearing level comparisons. *Deafness and Education International, 5*, 133–143.

Hyde, M. B., & Power, D. J. (2004). Educational inclusion of deaf students: An examination of the definitions of inclusion in relation to the findings of a recent Australian study of deaf students in regular classes. *Deafness and Education International*, *6*, (2), 82–99.

Johnston, T. (2004). W(h)ither the Deaf community? Population, genetics, and the future of Australian Sign Language. *American Annals of the Deaf, 148*, 358–375.

Kavale, K. A., & Forness, S. R. (2000). History, rhetoric, and reality: Analysis of the inclusion debate. *Remedial and Special Education, 21,* 279–296.

KUF. (1996). *The national curriculum for compulsory education*. Oslo, Norway: Royal Ministry of Education, Research, and Church Affairs.

KUF. (1998). *The national curriculum for compulsory education*. Oslo, Norway: Royal Ministry of Education, Research, and Church Affairs.

Leigh, I. (1999). Inclusive education and personal development. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, 4*, 236–245.

Lo Bianco, J. (1987). *National policy on languages*. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth Department of Education.

Luckner, J. (1999). An examination of two coteaching classrooms. *American Annals of the Deaf*, *144*, 24–34.

Luckner, J. (2001). Successful students who are deaf in general education settings. *American Annals of the Deaf, 146*, 435–446.

Mastropieri, M. A., & Scruggs, T. E. (2000). *Inclusive classroom: The strategies for effective instruction*. New York: Prentice Hall.

Mirenda, P. (1998). Educational inclusion of AAC users. In D. R. Beukelman & P. Mirenda (Eds.), *Augmentative and alternative communication* (2nd ed., pp. 391–424). Baltimore: Brookes.

Ohna, S. E., Hjulstadt, O., Vonen, A. M., Grønlie, S., Hjelmervik, E., & Hoie, G. (2003). På vei mot en ny grunnskoleopplæring for døve [Toward a new compulsory education for deaf students] (Skådalen Publication No. 20). Oslo, Norway: Skådalen Resource Center.

Power, D. J., & Hyde, M. B. (1997). Multisensory and unisensory approaches to communicating with deaf children. *European Journal of Psychology and Education*, *12*, 449–464.

Power, D. J., & Hyde, M. B. (2002) The characteristics and extent of participation of deaf and hard of hearing students in regular classes in Australian schools. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, *7*, 302–311.

Power, D. J., & Hyde, M. B. (2003). Itinerant teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing and their students in Australia: Some state comparisons. *International Journal of Development, Disability, and Education*, *50*, 385–402.

Power, D. J., Hyde, M. B., & Leigh, G. R. (1996). The language of teachers of the deaf to hearing and deaf students under simulated oral and simultaneous communication conditions. *Journal of the Canadian Association of Educators of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing*, *22*, 122–129.

Powers, S. (1996). Inclusion is an attitude, not a place: Part 1. *Journal of the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf*, *20*, 35–41.

Powers, S. (2002). From concepts to practice in deaf education: A United Kingdom perspective on inclusion. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, *7,* 230–243.

Rosenqvist, J., & Gustavsson, A. (1993). *A new school for learning-disabled students in Sweden? A contribution to the concept of integration* (Report No. 3). Stockholm: Stockholm University, Department of Education.

Sahlström, F. (1999). *Up the hill backward: On the interactional constraints and allowances for equity constitution in the classroom of the Swedish comprehensive school* (Uppsala Studies in Education No. 85). Uppsala, Sweden: Acta Universitas Upsaliensis.

Skarbrevik, K. J. (2001). Disabilities among Norwegian students found eligible for special education. *International Journal of Disability, Development, and Education, 48,* 253–268.

Sowell, T. (1995). *The vision of the anointed: Self-congratulation as a basis for social policy.* New York: Basic Books.

Stainback, S., Stainback, W., & Forest, M. (1989). *Educating all students in the mainstream of regular education.* Baltimore: Brookes.

Stinson, M. S., & Antia, S. D. (1999). Considerations in educating deaf and hard-of-hearing students in inclusive settings. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, 4*, 163–175.

Stinson, M. S., & Kluwin, T. N. (2003). Educational consequences of alternative school placements. In M. Marschark & P. E. Spencer (Eds.), *The handbook of deaf studies, language, and education* (pp. 52–61). New York: Oxford University Press.

Vislie, L. (1995). Integration policies, school reforms, and the organization of schooling for handicapped pupils in Western societies. In C. Clark, A. Dyson, & A. Millward (Eds.), *Towards inclusive schools?* (pp. 42–53). London: David Fulton.

Walther-Thomas, C., Bryant, M., & Land, S. (1996). Planning for effective coteaching: The key to successful inclusion. *Remedial and Special Education, 17*, 255–265.

Winzer, M. (2000). The inclusion movement: Review and reflections on reform in special education. In M. Winzer & K. Mazurek (Eds.), *Special education in the twenty-first century* (pp. 53–66). Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.