

How can we build a better school environment for children with a CI with the connection of social changes and learning ecosystems?

## **1.introduction**

In this essay I will write about how we can build a better school environment for deaf children with the connection of social changes and learning ecosystems. I will specially focus on deaf children who have cochlear implants and are going to regular schools. The reason I chose this subject is because I am deaf and I have a cochlear implant on the right side and I went to a regular school. Sometimes, it was really hard to manage, because teachers weren't nice or the accommodation was not nice. At the end of this essay I will write more about my experiences and struggles.

## **2. What is a Cochlear Implant?**

A cochlear implant has two parts. The outside part is the speech processor with a microphone which is in connection with the inside part. The inside part has a connection with the cochlear nerve. This part is placed by an operation. The speech processor receives the noise and gives it to inside part and that gives it to the cochlear nerve and that sends it to the brain.

### *2.1 Who can have a cochlear implant?*

It's not because you don't hear well you automatically get an implant. You can get an implant when you tried all the other hearing devices, and you still don't hear enough. Then you have to go to a special hearing centre and they do some tests. Then they decide if you should get an implant or not based on what age you are and how your results are.

### *2.2 What happens when you get one?*

When they decide you can get one, they will do a surgery to place the inside part. After the surgery you must wait for 6 weeks. After 6 weeks they start your hearing training with the cochlear implant. Most of the children visit a speech and language therapist for a long time so that they can learn how to hear with it better. You also need some speech training, because deaf children are already behind in language. When they are old enough to go to school it, depends on every individual child what happens next. Some children go to a special deaf school and other children go to a regular mainstream school.

### *2.3 My story*

I am born deaf. My mother had a CMV- infection during her pregnancy and this infection infected me in the womb. So, when I was born, I was very sick and deaf. They didn't know if I would survive it or

not, but I did. I got implanted in my second year. After that, I went to a speech therapist until I was 12, not only for speech but also for my dyscalculia and DCD. I went to a special deaf school for two years but then they said I was too advanced. I went to regular school and did my whole school carrier in regular school, but that was not easy.

### **3. Social Changes in Education**

#### **1. Mental health**

Schools are well-positioned to provide insight into children's mental health. Some educational establishments have mental health teams in place. A self-help programme has been the subject of some research. The programme is centred on five key skills: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and decision-making. The acquisition of these skills enables students to become more resilient, to perform better at school and to contribute to a more positive school environment. SEL programmes offer a range of advantages. Such programmes have been shown to reduce stress and anxiety, improve academic performance and enhance students' well-being. Such programmes facilitate connections between students.

This approach is beneficial for deaf students in mainstream educational settings, as it emphasises the development of five key skills. Self-awareness enables them to understand themselves and accept themselves. They are entering an environment where the majority of individuals are hearing, and they may not always be aware of the challenges that others face due to a lack of visibility of their disability. It is therefore essential for them to be able to recognise when they require assistance. The ability to manage oneself is an invaluable asset in such circumstances, enabling the individual to remain calm when faced with an incomprehensible situation or communication barrier. Such occurrences are not uncommon, and maintaining composure in such situations is challenging. Social awareness enables individuals to comprehend the emotions and perspectives of others. As a child, I was upset with my friends because I believed they were ignoring me. However, I was unaware that the noise level in, for example the swimming pool, was also quite high for them. The ability to interact with others effectively is a key skill that enables individuals to form and maintain friendships. It is a challenging process. It is essential to ascertain whether the other party will accept you. It is also important to have the confidence to discuss the issue, as people will likely find out and it is preferable for them to hear it from you directly. The ability to make responsible decisions is an essential skill for independence and problem-solving. These factors contribute to an improved mental health profile in educational settings.

## 2. Coaching the teacher

The role of the teacher has undergone significant changes over time. Previously, the teacher was the repository of all knowledge, and students were expected to simply listen and behave accordingly. In the current educational environment, teachers are expected to provide guidance and support to students, facilitating their learning and enabling them to take control of their own learning process. Teachers are also driven to develop their skills and become the most effective educators they can be for their students. Furthermore, governments are of the opinion that teachers should be coached and that they are always capable of learning. Teachers can follow a class to gain more knowledge, but they need to unlearn old habits and learn new behaviours. This can be hard, so coaches can help.

It can be argued that the presence of a coach in a class on a daily basis would assist the teacher in their role. Such an approach, however, can prove overwhelming for the teacher and is therefore not an effective strategy, as evidenced in the article. In the article "The Impact of Time Spent Coaching for Teacher Efficacy on Student Achievement," Linda Shilder presents the findings of a research study on the effects of coaching teachers. The study found that coaching has a significant impact on teacher efficacy and student achievement. Additionally, the study identified four key areas for effective coaching: instructing for specific content, modeling techniques and instructional practices, observing teacher practices, and consulting for reflection.

In Belgium we have support teachers who help children with special needs. In Belgium we call it "het ondersteuningsnetwerk" This is a network of people who are specialised in helping children with special needs in regular schools. The problem is that they just say what to do and then they leave. But the problem is that the government doesn't see how important it is. They don't have enough people to do this work. But the government wants more "special needs children" in regular schools but it doesn't work and that's why more deaf children go to special schools. So, I think if the government would spend more money on the coaching part of teachers. It can help deaf children because then the teachers feel stronger to teach deaf children and from a stronger teacher the child can learn more. We also need to normalise that a teacher also needs some help. When I did my internship as a health coordinator in a primary school, I saw that many teachers were afraid to admit that they need some coaching and support.

## 3. Learning Ecosystems

I chose to discuss two ecosystems which I think it can be good for deaf children in normal regular schools.

### *3.1 Competency-Based Learning Ecosystems*

Competency-Based Learning (CBL) is an education system that allows students to progress to the next curriculum when they demonstrate mastery of a particular skill or knowledge, rather than following a set timetable. It emphasises the development of specific competences rather than following a standard class schedule, creating a more personalised learning experience where students can learn at their own pace and control their progress.

CBL is an engaging approach for deaf students, as it enables them to learn at their own pace and concentrate on developing specific skills. It is important to note that deaf students often require additional time to process lessons, particularly when visual, written or sign language support is necessary. CBL allows students to progress to the next learning material only when they have fully understood a particular topic. This provides students with the space to work through the material at their own pace and in their own way. Furthermore, CBL frequently provides prompt feedback, enabling students to swiftly identify areas for improvement. This is particularly beneficial for deaf students who may require additional guidance or visual aids. By offering flexibility and a personalised approach to learning, CBL empowers deaf students to achieve success in their own way and overcome challenges posed by traditional teaching methods.

To successfully implement Competency-Based Learning (CBL) in mainstream education for deaf students, schools must take a number of key steps. Firstly, there is a need for greater flexibility in the time and pace of learning, allowing deaf students to work at their own pace. This entails providing students with additional time for visual explanations or sign language support when required. It is recommended that teachers utilise a variety of learning modalities, such as subtitles and visual aids, to enhance the accessibility of content. Furthermore, teachers must receive training in the use of these tools and in the implementation of CBL. Digital tools can be utilised to integrate subtitles and sign language videos, for instance. CBL also allows for regular, personalised feedback, enabling deaf students to identify areas for improvement more rapidly. Furthermore, it is crucial to collaborate with sign language interpreters and other support services to facilitate communication. This guarantees that deaf students can actively engage and fully comprehend the teaching material. Ultimately, CBL makes education more tailored, providing deaf students with equal opportunities for success.

### *3.2 Peer-to-Peer Learning Ecosystems*

In this learning ecosystem students support each other and learn from each other. In this ecosystem, the responsibility for the learning process is not solely borne by the teacher; it is also shared by the

students themselves, as well as between them. In this way, they learn how to identify and disseminate knowledge. This approach will be effective, if users demonstrate a greater level of commitment and engagement. They must consider the matter in greater depth and adopt a more complex approach to their thinking. It is important to recognise the value of considering issues from different perspectives and to appreciate that not everything is straightforward.

A key component of this learning ecosystem is the mentor and buddy programme. It signifies that fellow students provide assistance to one another. It is not sufficient to merely share knowledge; one must also explain and assist in comprehension. It provides students with an opportunity to gain confidence by demonstrating their ability to explain concepts to other students. Additionally, it facilitates a culture of assistance, where students are encouraged to seek help when needed. It is more convenient to seek assistance from a fellow student than from a teacher. Furthermore, immediate feedback is available from other students on the understanding of the material and the quality of the work. This is a non-formal setting, which is beneficial for students. A teacher may occasionally suggest improvement, but a classmate's feedback can often have a more significant impact.

#### **4. Conclusion**

If I may propose a vision for the school environment, it would be as follows. The ideal solution would be a combination of a special school and a regular school. I would have benefited from working with other deaf children throughout my school career in a small group, in order to develop the language skills that I required. This would have been a more effective use of my time than attending a regular class. Furthermore, having more deaf children in my vicinity would facilitate communication, as it would provide a platform for discussing one's emotions and receiving empathetic understanding. Furthermore, a school that combines special and regular education offers the opportunity to have teachers with specific expertise in addressing the needs of special needs children. This facilitates a more streamlined approach to professional development, as colleagues can readily provide guidance on specific challenges. Furthermore, a diverse student body in a mixed-ability school environment encourages teachers to adopt a more open and inclusive approach to teaching, rather than assuming that a child's needs are best met in a special school setting.

Furthermore, children can learn a great deal from each other. If we teach children that things can be normal, they will be more accepting of it. From an early age, my closest friends and I have been accustomed to repetition, which I believe is a key factor in fostering acceptance. If we were to introduce a buddy system in a play environment, it would undoubtedly facilitate empathy and

understanding of the perspectives of children with special needs.

It is my sincere hope that this vision can become a reality, even if not in its current form. I am confident that with the right approach, deaf children can thrive in a mainstream educational setting.

## **6. Resources**

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- Snoddon, Kristin. “Co-Enrollment in Deaf Education: Edited by Marc Marschark, Shirin Antia, and Harry Knoors, New York, Oxford University Press, 2019, 384 Pp., \$85 (Hardcover), ISBN 9780190912994.” *Deafness & Education International*, vol. 23, no. 2, Routledge, 2021, pp. 142–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14643154.2020.1804710>.
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