Supporting students who are deaf and hard of hearing in regular schools:

Influences on the support activities provided by itinerant teachers


Submitted to fulfil
the requirement of
Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Signed
This thesis is dedicated to the children who are deaf or hard of hearing that I have had the privilege to meet and assist, and to those children who may benefit from the research and reflection that may follow from this work.

I would like to thank a number of people for their encouragement and support. My wife Diana and my son Jesse have been endlessly supportive and patient. Br. Gerry McGrath provided the initial inspiration with his enthusiasm for assisting the language development of children and his willingness to think radically, and Alan Kelly has continued to challenge and inspire me. My colleagues within the Department of Education and Training have assisted and encouraged me over many years.

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Abstract

The study reported in this thesis investigated the influences on the choice of support activities by a total population of 14 itinerant teachers who work with 59 students who are deaf and hard of hearing in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). The support activities of the itinerant teachers were surveyed and compared with student files that documented the learning and development needs of their individual students, without exclusions. It was found that direct teaching formed the majority of the support activities, which were primarily focused on the students’ assessed and documented needs in regard to the development of skills in language, listening, and literacy. The teachers generally used combinations of explicit skill-based teaching, and teaching that integrated listening, speech, and language goals with the class curriculum and with the interests of their students. The provision of conversation was strongly supported by the itinerant teachers, as was the need for consultation and collaboration with the class teachers. Interviews and written comments were used to explore influences, other than student needs, on the support activities. Those influences included a strong collegial team structure, the availability of a program to teach auditory skills, and the requirements for consultation and reviews from legislation and schools. Individual education plans and summative tests were not found to be significant influences, but there was a consistent use of informal language progress monitoring to inform teaching activities. The findings were consistent across (a) a variety of school settings, including students with varied communication needs and those with additional disabilities, and (b) across a range of itinerant teachers who came from a variety of backgrounds. The results support the critical role of itinerant teachers in supporting language development by both explicit teaching and indirect activities.
## Glossary

### Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>A distinct geographic and political territory in Australia containing Australia’s capital city of Canberra, which contains 98% of the ACT population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASP</td>
<td>Auditory skills program</td>
<td>A program developed in New South Wales (NSW) a state in Australia, by Romanik (1990) to teach auditory skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHH</td>
<td>Deaf and hard of hearing</td>
<td>The commonly used way of referring to students who have a hearing loss or who may identify with the Deaf community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEPs or ILPs</td>
<td>Individual Education Plans or Individual Learning Plans</td>
<td>Both are documents for directing the teaching and resources used to assist with the education or learning of students with a disability. IEP is used in the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK) and in some parts of Australia. ILP is used in the ACT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOD</td>
<td>Teacher of the Deaf</td>
<td>Teachers deemed by the relevant educational authorities to teach DHH students: these include itinerant teachers and teachers in segregated settings.</td>
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### Terminology

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<tr>
<td>Communication teaching</td>
<td>Teaching any form of receptive or expressive communication: including listening skills, speech, spoken and signed language, reading and writing, and alternative and augmentative communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing support teachers</td>
<td>The term currently used for itinerant hearing support teachers in the ACT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itinerant teachers</td>
<td>Teachers of the deaf who travel between different school settings to teach DHH students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language teaching</td>
<td>Teaching the words and grammar of face-to-face communication as in spoken or signed language. Not to be confused with teaching literacy or language arts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream and mainstream settings</td>
<td>Refers to schools and classes that are not segregated for DHH students. They may be segregated for students with other disabilities, such as a resource room for students with autism, or schools for students with cognitive disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support activities</td>
<td>Supporting the students by direct teaching activities and by indirect activities such as providing consultations, giving presentations, and organising and attending meetings. Generally shortened to activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units or resource rooms</td>
<td>Separate classrooms within mainstream schools for students with disabilities, termed self-contained classrooms in the US and units in Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal teaching</td>
<td>Pull-out teaching in the US, where students are taught in a room other than the classroom.</td>
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