

History of change in education of pupils with severe hearing loss – Teachers' narratives from Finland and Sweden

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In this article, we present a study of teachers' experiences, specifically their own perception of their work over time with deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) pupils, in both Finland and Sweden. Teachers of DHH pupils are a minority amongst teachers in general, and also amongst special education teachers, because the number of DHH pupils is small. There seems to be a lack of research on experienced teachers' own perspectives on their practice, their role and experience over time in teaching DHH pupils. The aim of our research is thus to shed light on the work career of experienced educators of DHH pupils and on the main changes in it. In order to understand the current situation of DHH education which is realised mainly in mainstream education today, we need to know its history as well. The research questions are formed as following: 1) What are the main issues that teachers bring up? 2) What elements are there in the teachers' stories from different decades? A third minor interest is to determine whether the Finnish and Swedish teachers' stories about their work differ. The narrative approach was chosen here to illustrate teachers' experiences.

Background

Special education has its roots in the education of deaf and blind pupils. The first school for the deaf was based in Paris and opened in 1770. Before that, there was a dogmatic view that the deaf were not teachable, and this had consequences for their civil and human rights (Plit, 1984; Salmi & Laakso, 2005). This article is focused on teaching and power in relation to the education of DHH pupils. In addition, remarks regarding human rights are made. In most countries the teachers are in the service of the state and are required to act as the current educational policy demands. Thus, we asked experienced teachers of DHH pupils to discuss their long work careers. We dare say that few areas in special education have encountered so many changes connected to educational and social policy and technical development on a large scale over the past 30 years as the education of the DHH (Easterbrooks, Stephenson & Gale, 2009; Huttunen & Välimaa 2010; Takkinen & Rainò 2016; Roos & Takala, 2012; Takala & Sume 2016). This is one reason to study how teachers have experienced these changes. As there are few DHH educators in Finland and in Sweden, we collected data from both countries and compared them.

Our hypothesis is that these quite similar Nordic welfare countries do not differ in DHH education.

In Finland in 2010, a total of 420 pupils received special education in special settings because they had a hearing loss. That figure represents 0.07% of school-aged children (Statistics Finland, 2011). The situation is similar in Sweden, where about 4,600 pupils have some kind of hearing device (Coniavitis Gellerstedt & Bjarnason, 2015). Children with hearing loss in Sweden usually attend mainstream schools (84%). The remainder attend special schools for the deaf (9%), a special school for children with hearing loss (6%), or a special class in school for hearing (1%) (Hearing Loss Association of Sweden, 2014; Swedish Education Act, 2010; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2015). In this article, we do not focus on teachers educating pupils with mild hearing loss.

Language and the education of pupils with severe hearing loss

During the history of the education of DHH pupils, the main discussion has concerned how to communicate. Worldwide, different educational traditions and teaching systems have been adopted that use a variety of oral, manual or hybrid teaching methods (Brelje, 1999; Moores, 2001; Plit, 1984; Power & Leigh, 2004; Rittenhouse, 2004; Wallvik, 2001; Watson, 1998). Scandinavian countries adopted an oral tradition in deaf education after the Milano conference in 1880. Before the oral period, sign language was used in many countries. At the Milano conference, oral deaf educators convinced the audience to use only the oral method in the future. One fear was that if pupils signed, they would never bother to learn to speak. The oralists took the power. However, outcomes with oral teaching were poor (Hakkarainen, 1988; Trezek, Paul & Wang, 2010), and so deaf educators started to demand a return to signing. In addition, sign language acquired the status of a language through scientific research started by William Stokoe (1960/2005). Before this time, sign language was not considered an independent language at all, but rather gestures which could hinder the development of a “real” (oral) language.

Gradually, signing and sign languages have become increasingly used and accepted (Plit, 1984; Sign Language Policy, 2010; Spencer & Marschark, 2010; Svartholm, 1993; Takala, Kuusela, & Takala 2000; Wallvik, 2001; Bergman 2013). In Sweden, Swedish Sign Language (SSL) was accepted as a language in 1981, and bilingual education, which includes both SSL and national oral language, was included in the curricula in 1983 (Helmersson, 2003; Pickersgill, 1998; Roos & Takala, 2012; Svartholm, 1993, 2010, Swedish Education Act, 2010). In Norway, bilingual education was accepted in the mid-1980s (Norwegian Act, 1998). In Finland, the rights of sign language users were guaranteed in 1995 (Basic Law 969/1995, § 14). These changes resulted in the prevalence of bilingual deaf education in Scandinavian countries (Doherty, 2012; Ohna, 2003; Svartholm, 2010).

Educational policy, disability models and deaf empowerment

Views on hearing loss and deafness have changed in many countries since the 1970s. Before this time, the deaf were seen as disabled (e.g. Lane, 2005). The views of hearing people dominated, and the deaf had little power, even over their own affairs. Lane (1992) and Ladd (2003) referred to this situation as *audism*, regarding the treatment of the deaf as colonial (see also Vass, 2012). Hearing people made the decisions and had the power over those who did not hear. Ohna (2004) stated that deafness, as such, could be considered an audiological disability and/or seen as a social construction.

The human rights of people with disabilities were debated extensively in the 1980s, with the rights of intellectually impaired individuals providing the main impetus for the discussion. In 1975, the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. However, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities only came into force in 2008 (United Nations, 1975, 1993, 2008). This convention also mentions sign language, which affected its status positively in the 1980s. Oral language and speaking had been the norm in society; thus the deaf, who were not fluent speakers, were without power and had been oppressed, being unable to study using their own language (Bowe, 2005; Reichertz, 2011; Roos & Wengelin 2016).

With research into sign language and with changing sociocultural views on minorities and minority cultures, the deaf received a sociolinguistic status instead of a disability status (Leigh, 2008). The deaf people started to gain the same human rights, the same status and power in their own affairs as the hearing people (Parasnis, 1996; Stone, 1996); they became empowered (de Clerck, 2007; Batterbury, 2012; Padden & Humphries, 1988; Roos & Wengelin, 2016).

The change is connected to the growth of disability studies. The social model of disability, or “its American counterpart, the minority group model” (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2011, p. 269), challenged the medical disability model. The medical model points more to the individual, but the social model of disability focuses on social phenomena and human rights. Impairments can be defined as variations in human behaviour, functioning, sensory acuity or cognitive processing; in contrast, disability can be defined as a product of social, political, economic and cultural practices (Baglieri et al., 2011; Linton, 1998). Deaf empowerment was one cause of the spread of the linguistic minority group model, which includes, for example, the culture and cultural habits of deaf people as well as their own sign languages (Katsui, 2012; Padden & Humphries, 2005). Today the *deaf-gain* movement goes on from this, stressing the potential that the deaf have just because they are deaf (Bauman & Murray, 2014).

Inclusion and cochlear implants (CI)

The major political and ideological movements described above influenced inclusion policy and led to a demand for the same education for all. Currently, inclusion is a politically supported solution in the education of pupils, including DHH pupils. Consequently, many deaf schools in Scandinavia have become resource centres, with only a few children with hearing loss studying at them (e.g., Poeppelmeyer, 2011; Skårbrevik,

2001). However, these pupils have not always experienced inclusion positively (Dorries & Haller, 2001; Holden-Pitt & Diaz, 1998; Murto, Naukkarinen, & Saloviita, 2001; Vermeulen, Denessen & Knoors, 2012; Vermeulen, de Raeve, Langereis, & Snik, 2012). According to some studies, deaf individuals favoured segregation because they preferred a sign language environment instead of being the only deaf pupil in school (Ladd, 2003; Nordell, 2011; Tvingstedt, 1993).

The availability of CIs has promoted inclusion and radically altered deaf education. Pupils with CI see themselves as deaf in an audiological rather than a cultural sense (Hyde & Punch, 2011). With earlier implantation, good speech results have been reported (e.g., Hilton, Jones, Harmon & Cropper, 2013; Johnson & Goswami, 2010; Spencer & Guo, 2013; Spencer, Tomblin & Gantz, 2012; Thoutenhoofd et al., 2005) as well as school outcomes (Spencer, Tomblin & Gantz, 1997; Vermeulen, van Bon, Schreuder, Knoors & Snik, 2007), however, not at the same level with the hearing peers (Roos & Allard 2016; Spencer & Marschark, 2010).

Narratives and power

A Foucauldian approach to narratives can be taken, and narratives can be understood through power and history (Tamboukou, 2008). We will look at the history of DHH education using the concept of power, mainly as applied by Foucault, as well as a narrative approach. Foucault never wrote a theory of power, but he used several concepts of power in his writings. We will look especially for the three forms of power, namely *biopower*, *pastoral power*, and *disciplinary power* (Björk-Åhman, 2013; see also Faubion, 2001; Foucault, 1975, 1978, 2003a, 2003b; Lukes, 1974). Biopower can be seen as focussing on changing and shaping people. The concept of technology can be combined with biopower, as technology can offer power over people (see also Helèn, 2004). The concept of biopower is often used around themes like race, population and reproduction as well as genomic medicine (Rabinow & Rose, 2006). Foucault's biopower can be seen as negative, placing the deaf at the mercy of clinical and educational interventions, but it can also be seen as an opportunity to shape one's identity through biological associations outside the traditional power spheres (Lazarsfeld-Jensen, 2014; see also Friedner, 2010). Disciplinary power makes people internalise certain roles and practices in a given framework. It consists of norms and rules, which need to be followed (Foucault, 2003a, 2003b). The pastoral power lens can be used when studying the caring teachers who do their work on behalf of the state (McCuaig, 2012). This is usually a good power, including caretaking and aiming towards the good life (Foucault, 2003a).

A narrative approach has been chosen in order to receive more detailed and personal information (Elliot, 2005). Narrative theory is difficult to define, like the term *narrative* itself (Stock, 2013). These definitions depend on the discipline using the concept of narrative. Often, the concepts of story and narrative are used as synonyms (Riessman, 2008), and this is done here also. A narrative can be an extended response to a question, often in written form. A much-used distinction is that between event- and experience-centred narratives. In addition, we can separate individual or co-constructed stories. A co-

constructed story can be thought of as a common story, integrating common elements from several stories (Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou, 2008). Georgakopolou (2007) uses the concepts of *small* and *big* stories, both literally and metaphorically. From these we derive the concept of *collective narrative/story* in reference to something essential to a specific time, so obvious and striking in the stories that it can be called collective. A *collective narrative* is a kind of summary, a story of stories.

Method

Participants

Because educators of DHH pupils are so few in number, we decided to collect material from two neighbouring countries with similar educational histories. The main criterion for inclusion was at least 20 years of experience in the field of educating children with severe hearing loss, which would allow us to record narratives including episodes from various educational periods. The study included nine teachers from Finland and nine from Sweden (Table 1). The age of the participants in Finland ranged from 52 to 70 years (mean age 58). The age of those in Sweden ranged from 42 to 66 years (mean age 58 years). In the Finnish group, two wrote their narratives, two were interviewed by a student, four in Finland were interviewed by phone, and one was interviewed face-to-face by the Finnish researcher. In Sweden, all of the interviews were conducted face-to-face by the Swedish author. All Finnish participants had completed a special teacher degree and some had additional degrees, such as a subject teacher or kindergarten teacher degree. The Swedish participants were special teachers (4) or special pedagogues (5).

All names used in the study are pseudonyms, and place names are omitted for ethical reasons, since the number of schools is small. Any other details, which might reveal the identity of the teacher or school were also omitted for the same reasons. All of the Finnish teachers, except for one who was already retired, were working at a municipal or state-owned school for DHH pupils at the time of the interview. They had also worked in such a context for most of their working life. Of the Swedish teachers, six worked in a state-owned school for DHH pupils, one worked in a special unit for DHH pupils and two had worked in both at different points in their careers. During the previous working year, however, these two teachers had worked in an advisory department, which provides teacher support and intervention services for families with DHH children in the local county.

The Finnish-recorded interviews lasted from 40 minutes to 2 hours, and the Swedish ones took from 1 to 1.5 hours. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, the teachers were given the transcripts to verify and make changes if they wished. Only a few minor changes were made.

Table 1 Respondents, their hearing status and number of working years (FI= Finland, SWE= Sweden)

FI	Teacher	Starting year	No. of working years	SWE	Teacher	Starting year	No. of working years
1	Ann	1989	22 years	1	Louise	1990	18 years
2	Bertha	1978	31 years	2	Eve	1988	22 years
3	Cecil	1980	26 years	3	Mary*	1988	22 years
4	Dora	1974	32 years	4	Anna	1976	34 years
5	Edith	1977	32 years	5	Karen**	1991	19 years
6	Faye*	1969	39 years	6	Emma	1980	30 years
7	Guss	1979	30 years	7	Lisa	1976	34 years
8	Harry	1985	24 years	8	Margaret	1985	29 years
9	Iris	1960	39 years	9	Helen	1960	42 years

*=hard-of-hearing, **=deaf

Procedure

As this study used the narrative method, the participants were asked to focus on their memories of teaching DHH pupils at the beginning, middle, and end of their careers and then to share these memories with the interviewer. The teachers were reached via the biggest schools, six in Sweden and six in Finland, for DHH pupils, both municipal and residential. The heads of the schools were approached and asked to extend our invitation for this research to experienced educators who were still working or recently retired. The teachers then contacted us, and we gave them the framework of the narrative and agreed on a time when we could meet or call them. Everyone participated on a voluntary basis.

There is no one specific approach used in narrative analysis. Hyvärinen (2006) suggested several possibilities for analysing a narrative. From these, we selected *thematic reading* (see also Kluwin, McAnages & Feldman, 2001; Riessman, 2008). We broke all the stories down into emerging items and then compressed them into key themes (see also Phoenix, 2008) and individual subthemes. This was done both quantitatively, by counting similar kinds of expressions, and qualitatively, by looking for items belonging to the same theme. In addition, we tried to keep the narratives intact, theorising from the whole story, not just its components (Riessman, 2008). Thus, we adopted a holistic view of each story, focussing on major discourses and searching for *collective themes* present in the majority of stories. The narratives we read several times and various themes were found from them. These themes were combined into three head categories; *communication*, *teaching environment* and *pupils and their position*. These can be called big stories in comparison to small ones, where the researcher focuses more on details (see also Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou 2008).

The narratives were read by three people: the two authors and a third who is an expert in narrative research. We focused both on the local school level and the larger societal level in the stories (see also Riessman, 2008). After this, we discussed the narratives in relation to the educational policy during the time these teachers had been working as well as possible power elements. Several themes could be detected, but we decided to leave the minor ones and focus on the prominent ones – those on a more macro level.

Results

The results are presented in the order of the research questions. First we present the main themes teachers bring up. Then we focus on the elements of these themes chronologically. Finally, we comment on possible country-specific differences. All this is done using the lens of power. When citing quotations, F refers to Finnish special education teacher and S to Swedish special education teacher/pedagogue.

Main themes and their elements

The teachers brought up several issues, which are compressed into themes. The main theme, which was present in every narrative, concerned *change*. In addition, all teachers mentioned different aspects of *communication*, *the teaching environment* and issues related directly to *pupils*. Minor subthemes are interwoven into these main themes.

The main themes are the responses to our first research question. Additionally, common elements of these themes are in turn responses both to the first and second research questions. These are discussed below.

Communication in the face of change

The educational policy had changed in several ways, for example from oral to manual and in between during the careers of our participants. However, everyone participating in this research has not personally experienced both these phases. We will present the changes in communication in chronological order to focus on the historical development. The discussion about how to communicate has been lively at all times. Many of the teachers were attracted to the career of teaching DHH pupils because of sign language.

Signing, however, was not accepted in all schools when many of our participants started their work. In the 1960s, one teacher wanted to learn some signs, but not even the deaf wanted to help the teacher learn. In addition, they were not allowed to use signs at school.

He [a deaf man] did not want to teach any signs to me [the teacher]. He said, 'It's none of your business, it's the language of the deaf'. ... the deaf association was near, so I started visiting it, and there was also the priest for the deaf ... I told them I want to learn to sign ... I cried in the evenings while I was blamed for signing, although I was not able to sign. They suspected that I gave some signals to the pupils, some signs, but my hands swing naturally and they thought I signed something. ... I was observed during some lectures because they knew I had visited the deaf association. (Iris, F)

We can see here elements of disciplinary power. The orthodoxy of methods was considered so important that teaching was supervised not only by school authorities but also by colleagues. On the other hand, this could be considered pastoral power in that the motivation behind the supervision was ‘the good for the children’. The supervisors wanted the pupils to learn to speak not to sign in order to be able to speak when becoming adults.

And I told them (parents) about myself and I told them that I was not a pro on signing, but I will use it as much as possible in my teaching... and they became terrified. Because this was the oral time. And they have heard from the hospital – If you start to sign there will be no talking, and they wanted so badly their children to learn how to speak. (Anna, S)

Elements of biopower can be seen in grouping the pupils based on their abilities. According to our participants, in the 1960s there were speech classes, writing classes and signing classes, and so-called *writing schools* and *signing schools*. The narratives that we have chosen to represent these issues have connections to Lane’s (1992) and Ladd’s (2003) writings about the low status of the deaf and about the degrading approach to pupils with hearing loss.

In the 1960s, you were not allowed to sign during lessons at all. Articulation was most important ... when the teacher had taught all new words they were always articulated in class... easy sentences were written on the blackboard and read aloud from there I was observed during lessons in order to make sure that I was not signing ... However, in the 1970s, some sign language courses were organised for teachers. (Iris, F)

The importance of speech was underlined. ... It was self-evident that it was essential in teaching. We also had sign language, but it was actually signed Swedish. It was very important that one followed speech and used voice [...]I was totally convinced [...] one had just to sign and speak. I did not know that they had to lip read everything. In 1970, I had a sixth grade [class] with five deaf boys. I signed in my way, and they seemed to understand, but I did not understand them at all ... Then I started to remember that during our education, we visited school x and they had a totally oral system. They said that signs just confuse children. Then I thought perhaps they were right, perhaps it is not good to have a lot of signs. [...]It was already sixth [grade], and the level of knowledge was low. [...]I talked with my colleagues who had an oral system ... They said that I cannot demand more from them, they are deaf. They would have it pretty good if they at least learned to speak a little[...] (Helen, S)

The norm was a speaking, oral person and the power can be seen in placing pupils in different classes and in giving teachers orders to use speech. Nevertheless, the teachers were often powerless with their choice of communication method. There has not been enough research to base the teaching of the DHH pupils on a certain way of communication that would guarantee better results than another (Swanwick & Marschark, 2010). The instructions given to the teachers were in conflict with the reality they saw; several DHH pupils had lively communication with sign language but poor communication with oral language.

And I was surprised that teachers did not see it. The children taught each other and had lively conversations. (Emma, S)

When signing started to rise to prominence again in DHH education, the first form was signed Finnish/signed Swedish. That meant that only a limited number of signs were employed, and these were used to support speech. At the beginning of teachers' careers, very few evaluated themselves as competent in sign language in either Finland or Sweden.

And I struggled and used signs in my way of doing things. And I guess they understood what I said. But I did not understand at all. But that was that, but this will never work. If I do not understand what they sign. Then it is impossible... (Helen, S)

As signing became more acceptable, the teachers tell that they wanted to develop sign language skills. They attended courses, sometimes even in the summer. When sign language started to be more accepted, speech started to be abandoned. This was like a pendulum, from speech to signing and later back again.

I started in 1989 ... Sign language was very important then. (Ann, F)

In the 1990s, the status of the Finnish language was not particularly high ... and Finnish was kind of abandoned and sign language became as strong ... Speech teaching was also not respected and not wanted in the 1990s, although it was offered to all. (Guss, F)

Learning Sign language as an adult is difficult, it is challenging. Even now (after more than 20 years) if two adult deaf discuss their own issues quickly using Sign language it is difficult to follow what they say, but I can handle my work. (Harry, F)

There were various active stakeholders surrounding deaf education who commented on communication at schools. Some of the teachers gave negative comments about the Deaf Association because it criticised the signing skills of DHH educators in both countries from 1980 to 1990. At the same time, some Finnish university hospitals, and Swedish a like, also criticised the use of sign language, with hospital staff recommending oral communication rather than any form of signing. Teachers were between the two sides; no matter what they did, someone always criticized them.

...one little, a deaf four year old girl, who had a visitor from the hospital. And we got orders that we should not respond when she used gestures and other expressions of that kind or use gestures but we should speak loud and clear with her. And she was almost constantly in emotional stress, poor thing.... (Margaret S)

The teachers also recounted many positive experiences. They tell that the Finnish National Board of Education organised sign language courses for teachers in Finland. Teachers in Sweden were obligated to attend a whole sign language semester at the University of Stockholm. The Swedish teachers tell, they received full salary, accommodations and free travel home every weekend. These university courses started in the beginning of the 1990s and ended in the beginning of the 2000s, when every teacher had completed the education. In addition, many teachers used their free time to study sign

language in both countries. Several respondents followed the scientific research in the area, several narratives included stories of attending thesis defence or about reading scientific books. They were active learners.

... and we demanded a lot from the linguistics and from research and we met people working there themselves at the Department of linguistics and could sign and we wanted them to, that is, we wanted also to get possibilities to learn to understand signs and yes we were quite a demanding group. (Eve, S)

Our participants used several communication styles during their careers, such as speech, sign-supported speech and excessive articulation. Later sign language, and fingerspelling, and finally to use speech again with cochlear-implanted children.

Suddenly they started to operate on children, and there was no discussion, it was just the medical aspect. One summer when I came back, we had a child who had been operated on. Then the hearing service team demanded that we start to talk with this child in this genuine signing environment. Well, genuine in that we were hearing and had learned to sign ... it felt really strange to start to talk ... we could not speak and sign simultaneously, they are two totally different languages, and they should not be mixed together ... It felt strange. We actually had opposite groups at work. (Eve, S)

They [parents] think that if they receive the CI, the problems are solved. It seems they do not need sign language ... Parents choose to operate on the child so that they will learn to speak ... In my experience, they sometimes feel it is dangerous to know sign language. What is so frightening about it? It is one more language, like English or Spanish ... you give your child more languages, more possibilities to communicate. (Lisa, S)

Sign language – which most attracted teachers to the field – was also the target of the most power struggles, involving all forms of power. In addition to the already mentioned biopower, pastoral power can be seen in the form of the “best for the pupils”-thinking and in comments about a small number of words being enough for ‘them’ (deaf pupils). Disciplinary power could be seen in the guarding of orthodox methods by various stakeholders and even by colleagues.

The teaching environment and change

The teachers noted that both the teaching environment and the materials had changed. In terms of materials, the books and hearing aids have developed greatly. In the 1960s, there were no dedicated books for children with hearing loss; instead, books for hearing pupils were used. The hearing aids of the time were huge devices that used a clumsy FM system. Now, they are small personalised devices which are practical and easier to use.

Learning materials have developed ... there are books for special education ... you can individualise teaching. However, the children themselves have not changed. The child still needs a teacher in the classroom. (Dora, F)

I had been working in a hearing school before. I knew what books they had used. The books in the deaf school had very simple content, all the way to the higher level. (Helen, S)

Today, residential and municipal schools have started to lose pupils. In the 1980s and 1990s, the schools had many DHH pupils, and therefore, many social contacts for the pupils. Since the late 1990s, most deaf children have acquired cochlear implants, and their parents have sent them to mainstream schools. Implantation is biopower, according to Lane (1992); he writes about “a massive intervention in the life of the child to impose the majority’s language and culture” (Lane, 1992, s. 206). It could also be called disciplinary power while implantation has several effects on the identity, hearing or deaf or in-between. As the number of DHH pupils using sign language is decreasing both in Finland and in Sweden, support for signing in the educational environment is also declining. Classes have become more heterogeneous, and group constellations have changed. Several teachers in our study were worried about this change, feeling that highly diverse groups decrease the opportunity to engage in good educational practices.

There are few homogenous groups now. Before, we had speaking and signing groups, and they could be divided into two groups: good and not so good. (Lisa, S)

The classes began to be increasingly heterogeneous in the 1990s, with deaf, hard-of-hearing, dysphasic and moderately language-impaired pupils. (Ann, F)

Situation is much more complicated now because in a group there is an enormous variation...there are pupils with good communication skills, age appropriate developmental level and in the same group pupils not at all in the same lingual level. (Eva, S)

Sign language has been central,..it was in the position of mother tongue. Today the implant, it has effects on teaching....Pupils (in deaf schools) are more varied, there are more pupils with ADHD- or SLI-diagnosis. (Guss, F)

Parents today have the power to choose their child’s school. Educational policy increasingly emphasizes participation and equal access to high quality education. Some teachers said that although pupils attend regular schools now, special schools will still be needed in the future, playing the roles of resource centres. The teachers also commented on instructors’ position in the learning environment. They believed that it had been more authoritative in the past and is more equal today.

We still have pupils who first went to their nearest school and failed there. Then, they came here [to a special school]. Perhaps the schools for children with hearing loss will change into resource centres in the future.I was the leader ... a traditional pedagogy ... now it is more open perhaps, the climate in the classroom ... we have more dialogue with pupils. (Mary, S)

Our participants had experienced the old, authoritative school system as well as the modern one. The power at school is no longer just in the teachers’ hands; the pupils and

parents have become empowered, and as a result schools have become more equal, as well as more challenging places to work.

Pupils and the position of the deaf

The pupils and their learning were the main motivators for the teachers to remain in the field.

This has been so much fun (himla roligt!). You get so much back from the children. (Margareta, S)

...we have to find solutions that [help] pupils feel safe and trust [us] ... I want to develop and challenge myself to read research and look at how others work in order to help the pupils do better and improve their results. (Mary, S)

A deaf pupil is totally an ordinary pupil, a pupil just like any other. (Harry, F)

Teachers want to keep in the rhythm of development, to promote the learning of pupils. About 30 years in the area has convinced them that DHH pupils are ordinary pupils. To be competent in teaching them, needs continuous studying, but it is rewarding.

In 1960–1980, there were no deaf teachers in the schools for DHH pupils. However, according to our participants' reports, schools started to employ deaf assistants, teachers, and other deaf staff members in the 1980s. The deaf were first allowed to study to become deaf educators in the 1990s, and they brought deaf culture into the schools.

It was difficult in the beginning. I was not accepted first. (Karen, deaf teacher, S)

The teachers said that the change in pupils due to the presence of the deaf educators was enormous. It showed them that a so-called disabled person who had not been allowed to sign or did not dare to sign could become someone who was proud of sign language and his or her culture, and could even teach others (see also De Clerck, 2007). This had a great impact on the pupils, and the power of choosing the form of communication started shifting into the hands of the DHH pupils themselves; they could resist the power of hearing. As Foucault (1982) says, power is not only negative; it can give strength. Now, communication choices started to be officially available in the curriculum. This meant that the paternal power – the idea that someone knows what is good for the deaf better than the deaf do – started to subside.

Now that the deaf have a deaf teacher, they have a better starting point, linguistically. (Bertha, F)

When sign language was introduced in the curriculum, the self-reliance of the deaf improved. (Cecil, F)

The possibility of signing and the awareness and appreciation of deaf culture empowered the deaf pupils. These affected the teacher-pupil relationship, which had long been based on the power of hearing. The hearing teachers were seldom totally fluent in sign language

as it was not their mother tongue. The emergence of deaf empowerment attracted mainly negative comments from the teachers. Their experiences included verbal attacks and criticism from several stakeholders, including pupils, parents and deaf associations. This happened when the deaf empowerment movement was new and strong. Today the rights of the deaf seem to once again require action.

From 1980 to 1990, deaf consciousness was at its most extreme; with teachers exposed to it at every turn ... I think it was too much! ... How bad can we be as teachers? (Dora, F)

The status of sign language was discussed a lot in the beginning of the 1990s. The pupils became really (deaf) conscious, and their self-respect was high. There were hot debates over whether a hearing person is never good enough to teach a sign language user. It was like throwing cold water on hearing teachers. However, now the proportion of sign language users is so small that they need advocates. In many cases, the rights of the signing pupils are not fulfilled ... No skills in sign language are demanded from new teachers even when they want to come to this (state-owned special) school. (Louise, S)

The deaf pupils became more empowered when the position of the disability movement as well as various minorities were improving, and again we can see the swinging of a pendulum between the notion of good and bad teaching and teachers, fluent and not-so-fluent signing. Later, when the situation stabilised, discussions became calmer. Hard-of-hearing pupils were marginalised during this period according to some teachers, and there were only few narratives about them.

However, since this time, the situation of the deaf and the spread of sign language have changed again. Teachers, speaking about the 21st century, said that some pupils have now given up sign language, identifying more with pupils with normal hearing because of CIs. This has resulted in confusion.

Many people at school are worried about CIs because they fear that speech will become dominant again. They are unsure of how to deal with this. Should sign language be defended[?] ... but they hear actually quite well. Don't they need more speech then? (Mary, S)

Differences between Sweden and Finland

There were few striking differences in the stories regarding the education of DHH pupils in Sweden and Finland. One prominent difference was the prevalence of emotional elements, which were more numerous in the Swedish stories. One reason for this could be that the Swedish stories were all collected face-to-face, while the Finnish stories were not. This can have an effect on the validity of the data, but it is not possible to know what kind of. Another difference was that in Sweden, the state offered more resources for the teachers' in-service sign language education than in Finland. Otherwise, the elements in the narratives were surprisingly similar, with the teachers talking about language struggles.

Summary of the results

We will summarize each theme separately and then form a table of the main results.

Communication in the face of change. Communication at schools has been surrounded by power struggles, which on a positive note meant that teachers who had been involved in DHH education during the turbulent years managed to acquire a spectrum of communication methods. Some pupils needed sign language, some needed speech, and some needed something in between. Making this diversity function in schools was a challenge, and still is. On the other hand we also argue that the teachers were the local users of power when choosing the dominant teaching language variant for their teaching.

With regards to *the teaching environment*, the rather homogeneous groups of deaf and hard-of-hearing pupils in special schools have changed into heterogeneous groups of increasingly diverse pupils with various kinds of special needs or diverse cultural background. Also, DHH staff members have been employed among the hearing staff. Teachers faced a need for various pedagogical methods and a loss of some old, familiar ways of teaching, such as using sign language with their entire class. A longing for a familiar environment and a fear of its changing into something totally different could be observed, as could acceptance of the changes as a natural development. Inclusion and technical development, mainly in the form of CI, have greatly changed the teaching environment in DHH schools.

The pupils have been in the centre of the issues during all of the decades in question. *The position of the deaf pupils* has varied a lot, from the weak status of disabled pupils to the empowered status of a language minority. Nevertheless, their status is now vague once again, with the majority of ex-deaf pupils now implanted with CI who prefer speech. Still, some have sign language as their mother tongue or as their second language, and some have several disabilities and need various forms of support. Guaranteeing good education and equal opportunities for all of these pupils is a challenge.

The main results, including the changes, are summarised in Table 2. The timelines are only approximate, but they show some trends during these years.

The education of DHH pupils can be viewed chronologically with some collective elements, first as a *narrative of hearing* (see also McDermid, 2009 and Table 2) which gradually changed into a *narrative of the deaf and of sign language*. This occurred when sign language, which once had been forbidden, gained the status of a real language the use of which was allowed in schools. Recently, this narrative seems to have changed again, this time into a *narrative of technology* made possible by the development of CI and other devices. Perhaps this could also be called the *narrative of participation* (see also Miles & Singal, 2010) as the majority of DHH pupils are now included in general education.

Table 2 Main themes in the narratives in Finland and in Sweden

Themes	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
GRAND NARRATIVE OF	HEARING		DEAF AND SIGN LANGUAGE		TECHNOLOGY /PARTICIPATION
Communication	Oral	Oral, manual elements	Signing*, Sign language	Sign language	Oral, signing*, some Sign language
Teaching environment	Deaf school, segregation	Segregation	Segregation, integration	Integration	Inclusion
Pupils in schools	Homo-geneous**, with the identity of disabled	Disabled children	Hearing impaired or language minority	Deaf power, Language minority	Heterogeneous, multicultural, and multi disabled

*signing means signed Finnish/Swedish and signs as support;

**Homogeneous groups, having either deaf or hard-of-hearing in one group and no immigrants.

Discussion

The history of special classes in special education is long. It was based at first on the medical model of disability, which included the quantitative and qualitative difference between normal and abnormal. Until the 1960s in Europe, Britain and North America, and for even longer in Finland and Sweden, the segregated classes flourished and were unchallenged as the primary system to educate pupils with disabilities (Winzer, 2007). All of the Foucauldian concepts (Foucault, 1975, 1978, 2003a, 2003b) used in this article are suited to describing not only teachers' and pupils' relations but also the development of the educational system and policy. While special classes for the deaf were among the first in special education, the professional identity of these teachers was unique. The teachers were experts and had power over their *clients*; pupils and parents. At the same time they had to follow statements of the government and medical authorities. However, with the inclusive movement grounded in social justice, ethics and human rights, the situation started to change (Winzer, 2007). The 30-year period covered in the current study can be considered a time of language and power struggles, a time of the rise of human rights of minorities and the disabled and a period of great changes in the area of special education. The layers of the historical development of special education can be seen in these narratives. The changing viewpoints with regards to power can be tracked to the ontological existence of disability and even more so to its epistemological understanding (see also Hausstätter, 2010; Saloviita, 2006; Wintzer, 2007; Harling Stalker 2009).

According to our results, the history of DHH education seems to be repeating itself. At the very beginning, the position of sign language and various forms of signing were discussed a lot; now, after more than 30 years, they are under discussion again. Perspectives have changed, but the theme has remained: what is the best way to communicate with DHH children, and should sign language be used or not? The obvious

trend in the educational policy of DHH education has been the transition from segregation to inclusion in the 21st century (see also Winzer, 2007). Also in the 21st century, the majority of sign language users seem to be in special schools, not in mainstream education. This is also the result of a current national study from Finland, which has shown that only a handful of pupils are using sign language as their first language. If a manual form of a language is used, it mainly involves the use of signs as support (Selin-Grönlund, Rainò & Martikainen, 2014). In addition, the main discourse today seems to focus on technical details, like good hearing conditions and the use of technical devices (Coniavitis Gellerstedt & Bjarnason, 2015). Our participants, nevertheless, did not point this out on a higher degree.

Through the narratives, the use of different forms of power could be seen (see also Foucault, 1994; Gane, 2008; Hunter, 1994). The viewpoints were diverse, and it was not always possible to identify the power as biopower, pastoral power or discipline power. Grouping the pupils could be named as pastoral power but also as biopower. When certain children are placed in special groups because of a biological characteristic (e.g., hearing status), or when segregated settings are taken for granted, elements of biopower and discipline power are present. With respect to DHH pupils, the question is who has the right to decide, and who knows the best method to use or the best educational setting. The teachers used their professional power when deciding what type of communication to employ. However, official language policy was aligned elsewhere, away from the schools, and teachers had no ownership in it (see also Fullan, 2001). In the course of the power struggles, various battles were fought over what was “best for the children”; this could be called pastoral power. In these battles, CI underlined the power of hearing and the power of technology. However, it was obvious that power was used, and not always in a rational way based on an informed choice (see also Young, Carr, Hunt, McCracken, Skipp, & Tattersall, 2006; Nikula 2015). Now the deaf-gain movement empowers the deaf in a different way. The deaf-gain movement underlines the unique skills of the deaf, developed via visual orientation to the world, regardless of having CI or not. These are skills the hearing majority could also benefit from (Bauman & Murray, 2014).

The main findings of their research are intertwined. The teachers describe their work as fun and interesting, and at the same time difficult and confusing. It is obvious that through the voices of these engaged teachers (Mackenzie, 2012) it emanates a picture of teachers captured in between different aspects of power. The teachers can be seen as victims of a development where biopower is apparently forcing them to inevitably have to take into consideration the fact that their pupils cannot hear, and thus are in need of another way of communicating, which is alien to the teachers. But they are at the same time in power as members of the hearing society following the hearing norm, and thus caught in a dilemma. During the years passing the global development turns with the human rights movement and this affects also the education of the DHH pupils. This is probably also the case in all other education of pupils in need of specific educational support. In this case, however, there is also pastoral power working; the discussion of

best practise and best means of communication for the DHH pupils. There is still no clear research-based evidence showing how to best teach DHH children. Our view is that educators of DHH pupils have met enormous challenges, often without support. It is high time for the research and practice to come together and support good education for DHH students, both in general and in special settings.

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