Sociocultural Influences

DeFilippo, C., Dagel, D., Foster, S., McKee B., Barefoot, S., Crandall, K., & Gustafson, M. (1999). Designing learning community for young deaf adults: Can we improve program completion rates? In M. Kolvitz (Ed.), Empowerment Through Partnerships: PEPNet '98 Conference Proceedings (pp. 182-190).Knoxville, TN. [AN 1628] *

A learning community based on a model of linked courses was implemented for 14 freshmen with low reading and writing test scores compared to other entering students at a college for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Instructors collaborated on curricular objectives supporting successful learner behaviors, and discussed student progress weekly. A deaf student teaching assistant and intensive career and personal counseling were also provided. Goals were to develop attitudes and behaviors that would support positive academic experiences, engender feelings of connection, and thereby increase the likelihood of program completion. Compared to a control group, the experimental group more often attended class and submitted homework on time, was perceived as putting in more effort, and completed more courses. Students appeared to benefit from the clustered learning environment and intensive monitoring of their progress. Weekly staff meetings and an older deaf student as a teaching assistant were other key components of the project.

Implications

Participation in a Learning Community is known to increase retention of students in colleges for normal-hearing students. It enhances feelings of connection to the academic environment, which can result in more time spent on learning. The outcome is greater academic success, which engenders greater persistence and, ultimately, completion of the program. This study suggests that the benefits report for normal hearing students can be achieved at the postsecondary level for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. The current effort, with three linked courses and regular faculty consultation, represented a modest "cost" to the students and the faculty. Despite its limited scope, the results still favored the Learning Community. If fewer students leave school before completing a program, we can achieve a more cost-effective program and benefit greater numbers of students in achieving their personal and career goals.

Hurwitz, T. A. , Weisel, A., Parasnis, I., DeCaro, J., & Savir, H. (1997-98). Attitudes of deaf and hearing adults in Israel toward deaf people's career suitability. JADARA,31 (2-3), 23-31. [AN 1621]

This study investigated the expressed attitudes of deaf adults as well as hearing parents and teachers of deaf children in Israel toward career choices for deaf and hearing people by asking the participants to rate the suitability of 14 professions for deaf and hearing people. The results, in general, were consistent with those of other studies in the United States, England, Italy, South Africa, and India with hearing teachers and parents of deaf children, which indicated that the hearing status of the imagined advisees selectively influenced attitudes toward the suitability of certain professions. Deaf adults in Israel gave significantly

lower ratings for deaf advisees on 10 out of 14 professions and did not find any of the professions to be more suitable for a deaf advisee when compared to a hearing advisee. These results are in contrast to those found by Parasnis, Samar, and Mandke (1996) with deaf adults in India.

Implications

Documentation of the expressed attitudes of deaf and hearing people is an important step in working toward an attitudinal change in deaf and hearing people. This study helps to clarify both the universal and the culturally specific challenges faced by deaf people in overcoming the attitudinal biases toward deafness that exist in both deaf and hearing people.

Parasnis, I. (1998). On interpreting the deaf experience within the context of cultural and language diversity. In I. Parasnis (Ed.), Cultural and language diversity and the deaf experience (pp. 3-19). New York: Cambridge University Press. [AN 1556]

The perspective that deaf people should be primarily regarded as a cultural and language minority group rather than as individuals with audiological disabilities is critically examined. Historical and general sociopolitical context is provided to consider the concept of deaf people as a bilingual-bicultural group. The use of a medical versus sociocultural model also is discussed. Deaf people are compared with other hearing minority groups in America to examine the issues related to development of self-identity and group-identity, and it is concluded that deaf people's experiences often overlap with the experiences of other hearing minority groups but at other times are unique. The book organization and its scope are also provided in this chapter.

Implications

This chapter makes a case for a systematic academic analysis of the concept of bilingual-bicultural identity, and the importance of understanding the experiences of deaf people within the general context of cultural and language diversity. Understanding the theoretical issues and research findings in the general fields of bilingualism-biculturalism and minority education and discussing their implications for deaf education are important steps that can help us in designing effective educational policies and programs that recognize and support a deaf child's identity development as a bilingual-bicultural minority member of a society.

Parasnis, I. (1997). Cultural identity and diversity in deaf education. American Annals of the Deaf, 142, 72-79. [AN 1620]

This paper begins with a discussion of the sociocultural model of a deaf child as a member of a bilingual minority and examines its implications for deaf education. A case is made for recognizing ethnic diversity within the deaf community in designing and implementing educational programs and policies that strengthen the self-identities of deaf children. Several issues related to the accommodation of the diversity of deaf learners are discussed, illustrating how such accommodation would enhance their educational experiences. The use of technology, its potential to accommodate diverse deaf learners, and its influence on the deaf community are also discussed.

Implications

Acknowledging the cultural identity and diversity of deaf children and the complexity of their psychological experiences is the first step toward developing educational programs that meet the needs of individual deaf learners and help them realize their full potential. This article discusses some of the key concepts and issues related to cultural identity and diversity in deaf education. The goal of this article is to inspire some fresh insights, new thinking, and innovative approaches to deaf education.

Parasnis, I., Samar, V.J., & Mandke, K. (1996). Deaf adults' attitudes toward career choices for deaf and hearing people in India. American Annals of the Deaf, 141, 333-339. [AN 1163]

This study investigated the expressed attitudes of deaf people in India toward career choices for deaf and hearing people. Deaf adults from Pune, India rated the suitability of 12 professions for deaf and hearing people and gave written comments on the suitability of any other professions they could list. The results, in general, were consistent with those of other studies in the United States, England, Italy, South Africa, and India with hearing teachers and parents of deaf children and showed that the hearing status of the imagined advisees selectively influenced attitudes toward suitability of certain professions. Some differences in profession preferences also emerged, which indicated that the deaf respondents' criteria for career choice appeared to be primarily based on the use of hearing, speech, and visual skills in that career. These findings underscore the importance of understanding the attitudes of deaf people.

Implications

This study, taken together with previous studies, suggests that educational and technological opportunities alone are not sufficient to overcome attitudinal bias in either deaf or hearing people. Teachers and counselors as well as deaf people need to examine the subjective criteria they apply in giving career advice to deaf and hearing students. Documentation of the expressed attitudes of deaf people is an important first step in working towards attitudinal change in both hearing and deaf people. This study helps to clarify both the universal and culturally specific challenges faced by deaf people.

Parasnis, I. (2000). Cultural and language diversity and identity: Implications for deaf education (pp. 1-17). CD ROM Proceedings of the 19th International Congress on Education of the Deaf and 7th Asia-Pacific Congress on Deafness. ICED 2000 APCD Secretariat, Sydney, Australia. [AN 1731]

The sociocultural model of deafness views deaf people as a bilingual-bicultural minority group in America. The advantages and limitations of this model are reviewed here. The increasing ethnic and linguistic diversity among American deaf people suggests that a multicultural approach to deaf education that takes into account factors such as parental ethnic and linguistic background, race, and socio-economic status will provide deaf people with optimal access to language and information. The impact of diversity on the development of the self-identity and group-identity of deaf people is discussed. How to incorporate issues

related to diversity in the educational experience of deaf people and the role teachers can play as agents of change also are discussed.

Implications

This paper discusses the advantages of using a sociocultural model of deafness that views deaf people as a bilingual-bicultural minority group in a hearing society. It also suggests how educators can play a role as agents of change. The concept of hearing and deaf professionals as allies is introduced and its implications are discussed. The educational experiences of deaf students can be enhanced if teachers, counselors, and other professionals use this information to provide a supportive environment that respects individual differences as well as sociocultural differences within the deaf student population.

Parasnis, I. (2000). Deaf ethnic-minority students: Diversity and identity (pp.1-7). CD ROM Proceedings of the 19th International Congress on Education of the Deaf and 7th Asia-Pacific Congress on Deafness. ICED 2000 APCD Secretariat, Sydney, Australia. [AN 1732]

Individual differences among ethnic-minority deaf students in the development of cultural identity need to be recognized to design and deliver successful educational programs for deaf people. This paper focuses on the diversity and identity issues related to the experiences of deaf ethnic-minority students.

Implications

The impact of diversity on the development of the self-identity and group-identity of ethnic-minority deaf students is discussed. In particular, the stages of identity development in racial/ethnic minority group members and issues related to bilingual-bicultural identity development are discussed to show how this information can be useful in conceptualizing Deaf identity development in ethnic-minority deaf students. This information will be useful for educators, counselors, and parents in enhancing the educational and social experiences of ethnic-minority deaf students.

Stinson, M.S. & Antia, S. (1999). Considerations in education of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in inclusive settings. Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, 4, 163-175. [AN 1698]

This article provides an overview of key issues pertinent to an inclusive approach to the education of deaf students, in order to establish a context for the discussion in the Special Topics Issue of the Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education on the education of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in inclusive programs. It discusses definitions of inclusion, integration, and mainstreaming from placement-related, philosophical, and pragmatic perspectives. It also compares perspectives on inclusion in the general field of special education with those in the education of deaf and hard-of-hearing students. It considers the challenges of using an inclusive approach to achieve academic and social integration of students, as based on research on the learning and adjustment of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in regular classes.

Implications

In creating effective inclusive programs, educators must consider challenges to academic integration. These challenges include delayed academic achievement and difficulties with classroom participation. Background noise can interfere with communication access for many students who use hearing aids. In regard to social integration, public school students with all degrees of hearing loss interact infrequently with their hearing classmates and engage in less linguistic and more nonlinguistic interaction than their hearing peers. Degree of acceptance by classmates may be less than that for hearing peers. These difficulties have numerous implications for deaf and hard-of-hearing students in regular classes.

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