

**AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE ACADEMIC EDUCATION OF DEAF
CHILDREN IN NEW SOUTH WALES 1860s-1990s**

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

(Signed)_____

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AATD	Australian Association of Teachers of Deaf
FJDE	Federation for Junior Deaf Education
ITDs	Itinerant teachers of the deaf
ML	Mitchell Library - New South Wales
NLA	National Library of Australia
NSDCA	North Shore Deaf Children's Association
NSWDOE	New South Wales Department of Education
NSWDSE	New South Wales Department of School Education
NSWTAFE	New South Wales Technical and Further Education
OD	Opportunity Deaf
PPBC	Private Papers Barbara Crickmore
RIDBC	Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TC	Total communication
UON	University of Newcastle

ABSTRACT

This is an historical investigation into the provision of education services for deaf children in the State of New South Wales in Australia since 1860. The main focus is those deaf children without additional disabilities who have been placed in mainstream classes, special classes for the deaf and special schools for the deaf. The study places this group at centre stage in order to better understand their educational situation in the late 1990s.

That situation is seen to have been characterised by three contrasting attitudes of major players in the provision of deaf education. On the one hand are mainly educators, parents of deaf children, and deaf adults who view the educational needs of deaf children as different from those of hearing children. On the other hand is another group of educators who, along with supporters of the technological and medical perspective of deafness, see only a requirement to amplify sound to compensate for hearing loss to render the educational needs of the deaf as no different to those of their hearing peers. In the middle are bureaucrats and politicians who, over the history of deaf education, have often appeared to be more concerned with minimising the cost and administrative problems of education than with the educational needs of the deaf. Given the potential that each of these groups has for impacting on educational services for deaf children, it is vital that the reasons for the situation be reviewed and the main issues clarified.

Investigating the education of deaf children in New South Wales is problematic because it is a poorly documented area. At the same time, it is one which comprises many interlacing themes, an array of players with shifting influence and conflicting ideologies. There is also a strong underlying element of mythology with roots that trace back to ancient times. To date this disparate body of evidence has not been pulled together in an historically informed and systematic way. Moreover there is no study in New South Wales that explores the provision of education for the deaf within the broader context of the provision of education for the hearing.

The thesis has taken a chronological and thematic approach. The chapters are defined by significant events that impacted on the education of the deaf, such as the establishment of special schools in New South Wales, the rise of the oral movement,

and aftermath of the rubella epidemic in Australia during the 1940s. Within each chapter, there is a core of key elements around which the analysis is based. These key elements tend to be based on institutions, players, and specific educational features, such as the mode of instruction or the curriculum.

In the final analysis, the elements coalesce into a conceptual framework of five major themes which aid understanding of the development of deaf education in New South Wales. These are the culture of politics and advocacy of deaf education, the framework within which the instruction of deaf children occurs, the imposition of the norm of the hearing child on the education of the deaf child, the resourcing issue, and the "mesh of meanings" applied to the education of the deaf by the individual players and special interest groups. These meanings derive from traditions, underlying beliefs, attitudes and myths. At the same time, they may be supported by concurrent societal values and in combination penetrate bureaucratic and political involvement and decision-making and impact on the philosophy and pedagogy of deaf education.

The study found general agreement that language acquisition was a fundamental prerequisite to academic achievement. Yet the available evidence suggests that educational programs for most deaf children in New South Wales have seldom focused on ensuring adequate language acquisition in conjunction with the introduction of academic subjects. As a result, language and literacy competencies of deaf students in general have frequently been acknowledged as being below those of their hearing counterparts, to the point of presenting a barrier to successful post-secondary study. It is proposed that the reasons for the academic failings of the deaf are inherent in the five themes listed above.