

Vancouver 2010

A New Era: Deaf Participation and Collaboration

In partnership, the International Congress on Education of the Deaf (ICED) Vancouver 2010 Organizing Committee and the British Columbia Deaf Community present the following as a Statement of Principle.

Statement of Principle

Globally, many Deaf citizens encounter the general population's perception of being Deaf as one of disability. This "disability mindset" contributes directly towards the exclusion and devaluation of all people who are considered "different" including those who are Deaf. As a result, Deaf citizens in many countries are still hindered and excluded from participation in the larger society. Many are prevented from equal access to decision making, employment opportunities, and quality education.

Despite this 'disability mindset', Deaf citizens positively contribute to societies that embrace diversity and creativity. They enhance their nations in areas of education, economic activity, politics, arts and literature. For Deaf people, it is an inalienable right to be acknowledged as a linguistic and cultural minority integral to every society.

Therefore, all nations are urged to recognize and facilitate participation from all its citizens, including those who are Deaf.

The resolutions of the 1880 ICED Congress in Milan

In 1880 an international congress was held in Milan to discuss education of the Deaf. At that time, the members passed several resolutions that affected the education and the lives of Deaf people around the world. The resolutions:

- Removed the use of sign languages from educational programs for the Deaf around the world;
- Contributed detrimentally to the lives of Deaf citizens around the world;
- Led to the exclusion of Deaf citizens in educational policy and planning in most jurisdictions of the world;
- Prevented Deaf citizens from participation in governmental planning, decision-making, and funding in areas of employment training, retraining and other aspects of career planning;
- Hindered the abilities of Deaf citizens to succeed in various careers and have prevented many of them from following their own aspirations; and
- Prevented the opportunity for many Deaf citizens to fully demonstrate their cultural and artistic contributions to the diversity of each Nation.

Therefore we:

- Reject all resolutions passed at the ICED Milan Congress in 1880 that denied the inclusion of sign languages in educational programs for Deaf students;
- Acknowledge and sincerely regret the detrimental effects of the Milan conference; and
- Call upon all Nations of the world to remember history and ensure that educational programs accept and respect all languages and all forms of communication.

Accord for the Future

Let it be stated that we, the undersigned,

- Call upon all Nations of the world to ratify and adhere to the Principles of the United Nations, specifically those outlined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that state education is to be delivered with an emphasis on acquisition of language and academic, practical, and social knowledge;
- Call upon all Nations to endorse the resolutions adopted by the World Federation of the Deaf at its 15th Congress in Madrid in 2007 specifically those that promote and support equal and appropriate access to a multi-lingual/multi-cultural education;
- Call upon all Nations to include the sign languages of their Deaf citizens as legitimate languages of these Nations and to treat them as equal to those of the hearing majority;
- Call upon all Nations to facilitate, enhance and embrace their Deaf citizens' participation in all governmental decision-making process affecting all aspects of their lives;
- Call upon all Nations to involve their Deaf citizens to assist parents of Deaf infants, children and youth in the appreciation of the Deaf culture and sign languages;
- Call upon all Nations to support a child-centred approach in educational programs and a family-centred approach in all support services for both Deaf and hearing family members;
- Call upon all Nations to refer all identified Deaf infants to regional and national organizations of the Deaf, schools and programs for the Deaf for support with early intervention;
- Call upon all Nations to make every effort to ensure that their Deaf citizens obtain information about their human rights; and
- Call upon all Nations of the world to recognize and allow all Deaf citizens to be proud, confident, productive, creative and enabling citizens in their respective countries.

Signatures:

ICED 2010 Vancouver Organizing Committee

British Columbia Deaf Community

Canadian Association of the Deaf

World Federation of the Deaf

Definitions:

Child-centred approach - an education program that promotes the child's personal learning utilizing their strengths and natural abilities for learning

Citizen - a person with all inherent status, rights, privileges and opportunities of nation.

Deaf – may include anyone who is deaf, hard of hearing or deaf blind and self-identifies as being deaf

Devaluation – degrading perception of those who are 'different' than the majority population and are considered to be of lesser in value and abilities, and as a result are considered less deserving of status, rights, privileges and opportunities.

Disability - a term used by the majority population to define the population of people who have some missing or limited physical attribute such as physical mobility, sight, hearing or intellectual capacity.

Disability mindset - perception that views "person with disabilities as 'objects' of charity, medical treatment and social protection" (introduction to UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities).

Equal access - the same opportunity to receive and provide communication or information using the most accessible and functional equivalent means possible as perceived by the Deaf person.

Exclusion – act of excluding from status, rights, privileges and opportunities available to the majority population either by intent or ignorance.

Family-centred approach – a service that promotes an innovative approach to the planning, delivery, and evaluation of support services that is grounded in mutually beneficial partnerships among the child, families, support service providers, and the Deaf community.

Legitimate - having legal recognition in the eyes of a nation's law.

Linguistic and Cultural Minority - minority group of people who have a culture and language different from those of the dominant population in a nation or society.

Multicultural – having several different cultures

Multilingual – having several different languages

Participation – act of participating in various services, programs, and government decision-making processes