



Adding value: becoming an Educational Audiologist

Joy Rosenberg considers the importance of the role of the Educational Audiologist both in this country and around the world

Mary Hare with the University of Hertfordshire offers the MA/MSc Deaf Education Studies Programme comprised of three courses: the MSc/PGDip for Educational Audiologists, led by Joy Rosenberg; the MA/PGDip for Teachers of the Deaf, led by Helen Nelson; and the PGCert for Early Years and Deafness, led by Jane Peters. The Early Years course is discussed in the following pages within the companion article regarding the ToD course at Mary Hare. Additionally, students with a Postgraduate Diploma from another university may enrol for only an MA dissertation.

The MSc Educational Audiology course trains students to become an Educational Audiologist (a previously qualified Teacher of the Deaf) or an Audiologist in Education (working in Education but not a qualified ToD). As this is the only course of its kind in this country and potentially the world, it is useful to consider the historical and global context.

Context

Nearly 50 years ago, the 1970 Education Act transferred specialist audiologists for children, previously employed

by Health, to Education. Prior to the 1990s, training for educational audiology took place mainly at the University of Manchester. Since the 1990s, educational audiologists have had a bespoke postgraduate training programme at Mary Hare, spearheaded in part by Heads of Sensory Services collaborations in the south of England. The course was established as a means of bridging the gap between the services of health-trained audiologists, and Teachers of the Deaf.

In these 50 years, educational audiology has become fairly well-established in western countries, China and Russia; and is a growing entity in low and middle income countries according to Miles and McCracken (2008) in *Audiology in Developing Countries*. In countries such as South Africa and the USA, both educational and clinical audiologists are trained in the same courses which emphasise hearing sciences but also offer aspects of educational and language development. A brief review of the literature reveals the following: in the *International Journal of Audiology*, Goulios and Patuzzi (2008) suggest sustainable models within an international



perspective of audiology and education; whilst King (2010) outlines an Australian national protocol for children's audiological (though not explicitly educational) management. English and Vargo (2006), in *Journal of Educational Audiology*, confirm that over half of the clinical audiology training programmes in the USA have required components in educational audiology, and also (2012) consider audiologists to be a natural fit on the literacy team with literacy skill development being a logical extension of paediatric audiological practice. In fact, current textbooks written for clinical audiology training courses focus either entirely or in part on education (e.g. Smiley's *School-based Audiology* and Madell's *Pediatric Audiology*). A letter to the editor of *American Annals of the Deaf* (Marlatt, 2014) reflected on the possibility that education of deaf people is evolving into a primarily clinical discipline. Closer to home, Simkiss (2013) in *Paediatrics and Child Health*, describes educational audiology in the UK as key, and cites the BAEA's (British Association of Educational Audiologists) recognition of the wide variability of this specialist role.

Roles and Competencies

The BAEA publishes roles and competencies for the profession that cover child and family support, educational assessment, inclusion advice, inservice training for both health and education, educational and personal amplification systems, multiprofessional working and audiological testing. In the past year BAEA has collected data to demonstrate the variations in roles across the country as well as the value added by an educational audiologist. For example, one educational audiologist submitted a case study about a family she had served in her previous Teacher of the Deaf role for several years. During her time on the educational audiology course, she began implementing strategies she learned by adjusting or enhancing her practice. This

'made all the difference in the world' according to the parents as to how this child was able to function and therefore to the family's well-being. The amount of support otherwise required could eventually be reduced, which together with the collaborative Educational Audiologist's role enabled effective multidisciplinary working to thrive. The student indicated this never would have happened had she not enrolled on the course.

Further evidence is being collected by the BAEA from Audiologists, Teachers of the Deaf, Heads of Audiology and Sensory Services, Children's Hearing Services Working Groups, parents of deaf children and other stakeholders to inform conclusions and position statement writing about the future of the profession and training in the UK.

Content and Structure

The educational audiology course is undertaken part-time and comprises content which falls under four modules in two years for a PG Dip as follows:

- Acoustics, Anatomy and Physiology
- Audiological Assessment and Habilitation
- Family-Friendly Assessment and Habilitation
- Psycho-acoustics, Anatomy and Physiology

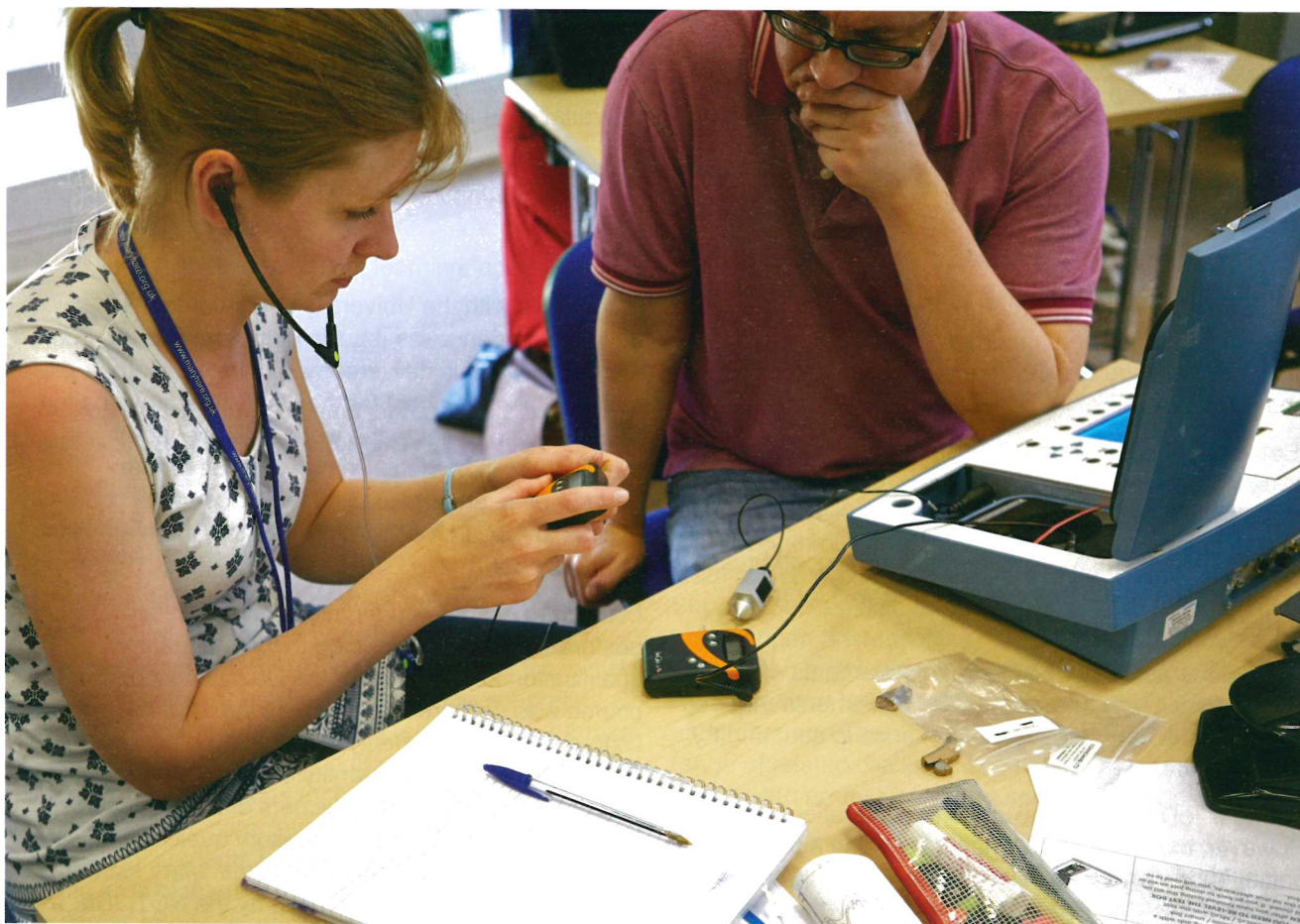
A significant assignment for the postgraduate diploma is a reflective portfolio on 120 hours of work-based learning via clinic and school field experience, which a student organises themselves. Students have commented repeatedly that this assignment has been a gold standard for them in terms of meaningful learning. They have built professional multi-disciplinary relationships, gained significant clinical skills related to assessment and hearing instruments, and contributed a great deal of knowledge about the educational environment of children to the health audiology teams.

A 5th module (Research Methods and Dissertation) in the 3rd year completes the MSc. Students have submitted original pieces of qualitative and quantitative research work on a wide variety of topics ranging from microphone placement of FMs to hearing aid refusal by adolescents. These have contributed new knowledge to the profession and in some instances been a 'game-changer' for practice locally and/or nationally.

Learning, Teaching and Student Experience

Faculty and guest lecturers include experts in educational and clinical audiology, education of the





deaf, speech and language therapy, early intervention, educational psychology and research. The course is externally examined and is undergoing an endorsement process by the British Academy of Audiology. Teaching facilities for training, including technology and equipment, receive commendations from student feedback in terms of their benefit to learning. So too does accommodation and catering as students find the face-to-face residential aspect of the course very important to their learning experience overall.

State-of-the-art technology is provided by manufacturers of hearing instruments, diagnostic and acoustics equipment, and assistive listening devices and systems. Further technology to enhance the course is via the university's virtual learning environment, Studynet. Using Studynet, students can access the online library, all course documentation, notes for lectures and other teaching resources, and assignment briefs, feedback and marks.

Student voice is very important to course development. Feedback on their experience in official student surveys has included the following comments:

- "The instructors are very knowledgeable and quite good at imparting their knowledge."
- "Explanations of practical activities are very clear using equipment and projectors to demonstrate."
- "Enjoyed relaxed approach to assessments which allowed me to thrive."

- "Coursework was very applicable, enabled me to do my job well and reminded me about all the parts of the job I really enjoy."

Onwards

Together with the BAEA, evidence is being collected to help assess value-added and inform the way forward for educational audiology training and service provision, as well as for early years intervention. Our next step involves surveying various groups for professional opinion including Teachers of the Deaf. Mary Hare is committed to postgraduate training in education of deaf children and young people and confident that a sufficient number of students can be recruited for the MSc Educational Audiology course in September 2016 in light of new scholarship initiatives and biennial intake. In considering financial viability of courses, a minimum 10 enrolments by 15 July 2016 will be needed to ensure that the course will run.

Additional related opportunities for training are offered at Mary Hare, including audiology/technician short courses and BTEC. The short courses are accredited by the British Society of Audiology and include Earmould Impression-taking for ages 5 and above, Pure Tone Audiometry and Tympanometry. Further information (eg entry requirements, fees and scholarship information) are available on our website.
<http://www.maryharschool.org.uk/courses>

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