

End of first year report on the BAICE thematic Forum

Education of children with disabilities in Southern countries

Jointly hosted by University of Cambridge and University of Birmingham

Overview and the nature of events

The first year of the Forum focused on examining methodological issues in researching disability in the South.

The first seminar (23 November 2012) was held at the University of Birmingham on the topic “**Methodological issues in researching disability in the South**”. Our speakers were: Professor Colin Robson, Emeritus Professor at University of Huddersfield, Dr Juliet Bedford, Director, Anthropologica and Research Associate, School of Anthropology, University of Oxford, and Professor Alarcos Cieza, University of Southampton. The presentations focused on the use of large scale data sets in disability research, the politics of disability data collection, the role of small scale qualitative studies in influencing policy and the potential of using the revised WHO ICF classification on disability, functioning and health. The seminar was attended by 33 people, who came from various parts of the UK and two from Sweden. The participants had mixed profiles with majority being doctoral students. We were also successful in bringing in people from the NGO sector. The day was organised in a way that allowed for substantial time for discussions and reflections and opportunities for networking.

The feedback received at this forum was extremely positive. We not only collected verbal reflections but also asked all participants to fill in an evaluation form. This was extremely useful as it helped us become more confident about the format we were using, and enabled us in sharpening the focus of the second seminar.

Some of the written comments we received were: 'Excellent presentations. Methodological dilemmas presented in a very accessible, critically, reflective way'. 'Many ethical issues arise from today's presentations. This might provide a useful focus for future events.' 'It's been a great opportunity to network and look at a much broader aspect on disability in the South'.

The second seminar (03 May 2013) was held at the University of Cambridge and was titled, “**Ethics and Disability research in Southern contexts: unexplored terrain, unresolved tensions**”. Our three speakers for this event were: Professor Nora Groce, University College London, Dr Shaun Grech, Manchester Metropolitan University, Dr Guy Le Fanu, Programme Development Advisor at Sightsavers. Each of the speakers reflected on ethical issues drawing on their own research journeys and provided participants with questions for discussions, which took place in small groups. A total of 38 participants attended this event, and they represented a range of Universities in the UK and three participants came from Sweden and Norway. Even more reassuring was the fact that many of the participants who had attended

the first seminar came for this event too. This was particularly useful in developing a sense of belonging and laying the foundations of a possible network in the future.

The seminar received very positive (formal and informal) evaluations, with many people commenting on the highly participatory nature of the event and the intellectual rigour of the discussions.

Key reflection points

- We were able to draw in a good spread of people from different universities in UK and abroad. Many participants voiced the need for such on-going deliberations in helping the field of disability studies and education to move forward. The two events also provided ample opportunities for cross-cultural discussions and participants debated ways in which disability issues can be brought into more mainstream academic thinking (and journals).
- Given that thematic forums are a way through which we can increase the Association's visibility and membership base, we made sure that all our posters and other publicity material had the BAICE logo and we plugged the BAICE website and the Compare Journal at various points during the events. On reflection it would have been good to include in our evaluation form a section on BAICE- how familiar were participants with the Association prior to attending the event and where did they get the information about the seminar?

We are looking forward to the second year of the forum.

Nidhi Singal and Paul Lynch

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