

Kirke-Van Vught, A, 1996, *The integration of Hearing-impaired students into mainstream Education (with special reference to second-level)*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

We, as a people, are remarkably ignorant about deafness or hearing-impairment. Indeed, the 'handicap' was once referred to by the eminent essayist, Dr. Johnson, as "*one of the most desperate of human calamities*". But wherein lies the calamity? Is it within the handicap itself or within the perceptions and fears of the hearing world regarding this handicap? In reality, the greatest handicap is not the deafness but the multitudinous emotional, intellectual and social effects which are allowed to develop because of the fact that a person cannot hear. Fortunately, much progress has been made since the time of Dr. Johnson and many studies have evolved focusing, in recent decades, on the notion of educational integration.

Influenced by the *Warnock Report, 1978*, a watershed in the field of Special Needs Education, documents and policy in Britain and Ireland fervently advocate the mainstreaming of hearing-impaired and indeed, other handicapped children, This policy change reflects positive changes in public attitudes in recent years. This study proposes to examine the ideologies behind the concept of integration, to explore the various documents, reports and legislations in both Ireland and Britain and to look to the realities of integration through the tracing of the establishment of an integrated system for hearing-impaired students in a second level school.

The influential role of school management, administrators, educators and parents will be analysed and an empirical study will explore the social effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the concepts and realities of integration. Integration is a positive step forward. It is no longer a dream but a challenge - our challenge as educators.