Professionals' and Parents' Shared Learning in Blended Learning Networks related to Communication and Augmentative and Alternative Communication for People with Severe Disabilities

6th International Carers Conference
Gothenburg 4-6 September 2015
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- People with severe disabilities (SD) communicate in complex ways

- Few experts – spread out

- Carers find it difficult to gain knowledge and share their experiences regarding the person with SD's communication

- Coproduction between University and SFCCC in online web-based course about communication and AAC

- Resulted in a publication:

Wilder, J, Magnusson, M. & Hanson, E. (2015)

Blended Learning Networks

BLN Groups	Professionals	Parents	Total
A	4	3	7
B	8	3	11
C	3	6	9
D	6	3	9
	Total: 21 (20 Female and 1 Male)	Total: 15 (13 Mothers and 2 Fathers)	Total: 36

Pre-prepared format
1. Communication in general
2. Communication/AAC in school
3. Communication/AAC and technology
4. Communication/AAC and the holistic perspective
5. Evaluation session + Questionnaire

Communication in general

"From the beginning we were probably more in to that she would learn to walk and run and such – until we came to the conclusion that if you can't talk or communicate you'll be excluded and that communication is the most important thing." (Parent, BLN D)

"You can see so clearly on our daughter that she sounds in certain situations and signs in other situations depending on how it's received. It's almost scary how dependent our children are of how their communication is received." (Parent, BLN C)

Communication/AAC in school

"When we got hold of the pictures, her communication started in all areas." (Parent, BLN C)

"Just to be aware that something's happened at home ... instead of tearing the shirt it became a good day because someone saw and had time to stop it." (Professional, BLN B)

"Those of us who work with pupils have to be some kind of all-round artist. You have to be incredibly attentive in the moment." (Professional, BLN A)

Communication/AAC and technology

"My daughter uses the iPad. She's incredibly free to be like everyone else when she uses it, compared to many other things. Here she's more on the same level as her brothers. Here, there are suddenly things that she's able to do herself. Then it strengthens her self-esteem." (Parent, BLN C)

"It becomes easier to re-tell, otherwise they might just remember the very last thing that happened on the day. If you've got the pictures or slideshows though it's just fantastic." (Professional, BLN D)

Communication/AAC and a holistic perspective

"The (personal) assistants sat patiently on a chair outside the teenage boy's room. They recognized themselves at that age." (Parent, BLN A)

"But they've not received any supervision from their special educator. So it's ignorance, and they should need more material too. And who's responsible? But everyone is – so no one takes responsibility. It's sad – though it was probably meant to be the other way around." (Parent, BLN A)

Blended Learning Networks

- Participants actively looked forward to exchanging knowledge with one another

- The voices of all participants were heard

- Mixed groups of parents and professionals within the BLNs provided an overwhelmingly positive experience

- IMP = technical support continuously, distance course in the evenings made it possible to participate

Conclusions

- Technical AAC, e.g. Ipads och apps, were a part of everyday life and the universal design facilitated new kinds of social participation

- The BLNs served as a neutral meeting place for both professionals and parents

- Empowerment to be able to discuss and share experiences related to communication and AAC with others in an organized manner

Thank you!

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