

A Conversation on Global Issues in Augmentative and Alternative Communication



ISAAC 2014: Lisbon, Portugal

Introduction



- Providing appropriate services for individuals who have significant communication disabilities and require augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is an issue faced by many professionals globally.

Barriers




- Barriers to providing adequate AAC support services worldwide include:
 - the inadequate number of trained professionals
 - the challenge of developing local AAC intervention resources
 - cultural and societal factors that need to be considered when working with families from different cultures
 - Alant, 2007; Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997

Aim


- The present study investigated the perspectives of AAC professionals from 10 countries on AAC availability, service provision, and other issues.
- Participants contributed to an internet-based group discussion conducted on a wiki space.
- Participants were professionals working with individuals with complex communication needs from around the world and represented 10 countries outside of the United States.

Participants

PROFESSIONALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juan Bornman • Paula Herkman • Sharif Mamun • Tone MjØen • Aldona Mysakowska-Adamczyk • Annette Nylund • Catherine Olsson • Eunhye Park • Sharon Shaham • Smita Worah • Sarah Yong 	PENN STATE (US) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kathryn Drager • Samantha Fecich • Nimisha Muttiah • JiYoung Na • Laura Richardson • Vanessa Smith • Michelle Therrien • Jennifer Thistle • April Yorke 
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Countries represented

- Australia
- Bangladesh
- Finland
- India
- Israel
- Korea
- Norway
- Poland
- Singapore
- South Africa





Procedures

- “Wikispaces” conversation over a period of 12 weeks.
- Topics :
 - 1) societal practices that impact AAC use and service delivery,
 - 2) factors related to family life that impact AAC system design and service delivery,
 - 3) factors associated with language that effect AAC system design and service delivery, and
 - 4) access to AAC systems and training for professionals providing AAC services.

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Themes

- All comments analyzed and organized into themes
- Three major themes:
 - (a) obtaining access to AAC systems and knowledge on AAC,
 - (b) describing the processes related to AAC service delivery, and
 - (c) describing perceptions of AAC and advocacy



ACCESS
1.1 Access to services

- Access was limited
- “A general lack of support/resources in schools...contribute to how disability is seen in South Africa.”
- “For the most part there is access to allied health based AAC service delivery, at least to school age, pretty consistently across the states.” [Australia]



ACCESS
1.2 Access to knowledge and training

- Organizations conducting trainings
- “In Singapore, AAC is going to be a range indicator for our Masters of Speech Language Pathology course.”
- Lack of training and trained personnel
- “Other challenges was and still is I think a lack of training and awareness in general as well as special educators.” [India]




ACCESS
1.3 Access to AAC systems

- Legislature supporting access to systems
- “Everyone is granted by law the right to assistive technology when needed.” [Finland]
- Systems appropriate to language/culture
- “Our letter system is not the Roman alphabet and quite frequently high tech systems (e.g., apps) turn our text into gibberish so it’s not usable.” [Israel]
- “In Kolkata where I worked, we were the first agency to develop culturally and linguistically appropriate symbol set for the south-east Asia region.”
- Funding
- “Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world where 29% of the population lives on less than US \$1.00 a day. That is why, they have limited financial support to make or buy [a] AAC system.”




SERVICE DELIVERY
2.1 Process of service delivery

- Evaluation and intervention services
- "The [evaluating is] done mostly in central hospitals and their centers for assistive technology loan the devices." [Finland]
- "There is enormous variability in how well collaboration occurs, and there are personal, systemic and cultural factors that impact on how successfully it occurs." [Australia]



SERVICE DELIVERY
2.2 Working with families

- Involving families in AAC implementation
- "The situation in Poland is a process of many changes in the social and family life for AAC users. However, I'm afraid that there are still many schools in Poland with AAC focused only on student's academic needs, ignoring student's family life."
- "We typically do AAC training at our centre together with the parents." [Singapore]



PERCEPTIONS AND ADVOCACY
3.1 Child and family

- Parents' perceptions of AAC
- "Many parents don't have enough knowledge about disability. They thought their children will communicate through speech." [Bangladesh]
- "Typically, parents would 'protect' or 'care for' these children and meet many of their needs, and therefore the children do not need to express themselves." [Singapore]




PERCEPTIONS AND ADVOCACY
3.2 Professionals, including therapists and schools

- Need for advocacy
- "Korea is about to form a Korean association of AAC in [the] near future!!"
- "Creating awareness and working with various stakeholders is very important." [Singapore]


PERCEPTIONS AND ADVOCACY
3.3 Community and society

- Perceptions of disability in general
- "AAC service delivery has to be viewed against the larger backdrop of attitudes and perceptions towards disability in our country context." [South Africa]
- Increasing public awareness
- "People with CCN are not provided with a voice at the decision making or even advocacy tables." [Australia]
- "Tomorrow we were planning on protesting in front of the Israeli Health Bureau who were going to meet to discuss what drugs and devices would be covered under medical insurance as they denied all of our requests in the last few years."



Conclusion

- This study discusses important factors that influence AAC service provision worldwide.
- The findings of this study will help inform future global AAC service delivery and will hopefully serve as a platform for a holistic and global approach to considering issues in AAC.



Discussion, Directions, and Conversation

Setting Priorities

Subthemes	Examples
1.1 Access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access
1.2 Access to knowledge and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations conducting trainings Lack of training and trained personnel
1.3 Access to AAC systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislature supporting access to systems Systems appropriate to language/culture Funding
2.1 Process of service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation and intervention services
2.2 Working with families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involving families in AAC implementation
3.1 Child and family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents' perceptions of AAC
3.2 Professionals, including therapists and schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for advocacy
3.3 Community and society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of disability in general Increasing public awareness