



**A Cross Cultural Comparison of Teacher Perceptions of the Efficacy of the Sherborne @ Sunfield Training Package in Supporting Practitioner Knowledge and Skill Acquisition to Enhance the Social Engagement of Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders**

This research project is funded by the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation. Teachers of students with severe autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) are challenged with exploring new and innovative approaches to ensure the specific educational needs of this unique group of learners are met. This challenge is not UK specific and is indeed a challenge faced by educators across the world.

Sherborne Developmental Movement Programme was originally designed by Veronica Sherborne to meet the needs of children with learning disabilities, enabling them to develop body awareness, social interaction, communication and relationship building skills. In 2004 Sunfield obtained funding from the Three Guineas Trust to explore the efficacy of this Programme in relation to the specific difficulties encountered by children with ASD (Konaka 2007). This two year national study involved eleven English speaking special schools in the UK and culminated in the development of the Sherborne@Sunfield Training Package, which offers a more structured and visually based programme appropriate to the learning styles of children with ASD. The package contains a training DVD, guidelines and supporting resources and is aimed at practitioners who have been trained to Sherborne Level I.

Through the current funded research project, a theoretical sample of Japanese teachers will be trained in Sherborne Level I and the Sherborne@Sunfield Programme. The Japanese teachers will then work with a cohort of students with autistic spectrum disorder for a period of six months. Their English counterparts will mirror this process in the UK. The aims of the study are to explore:

- How does the Training package support knowledge and skill acquisition in teachers of children with ASD to enable them to deliver the Sherborne@Sunfield Programme?

- How does the Sherborne@Sunfield programme enhance the social engagement of children with ASD?
- How do the perceptions of the teachers in relation to the Sherborne@Sunfield programme compare between the Japanese and the UK settings?

## Methodology

This research will take adopt a mixed methods design but will primarily be concerned with gaining an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of teaching professionals in both the UK and Japan.

A case study approach will enable this research to build on the constructs developed through the Sherborne@Sunfield research (Konaka 2007). The theories generated by Konaka's research will be tested through implementation of the Sherborne@Sunfield Programme and the associated Training Package in Japan and the UK.

## Timeline

Aug – Oct 2007	Design Research Framework
Oct – Nov 2007	<b>Phase I – Theory Delivery &amp; Knowledge Acquisition</b> Training teachers in Japan & UK
Jan – June 2008	<b>Phase II – Theory Implementation</b> Case study implementation of Sherborne@Sunfield in both case study sites
June – July 2008	<b>Phase III – Evaluation &amp; Dissemination</b> Conference in Japan & Preliminary report
Aug – Oct 2008	Further detailed analysis & final report

## References

Konaka, J. (2007) 'Developing social Engagement through Movement : An adapted teaching approach for children with ASD' in E. Marsden & J. Egerton (eds) *Moving with Research : Evidence-based practice in Sherborne Developmental Movement*, Clent : Sunfield Publications.

Konaka, J. (2007) 'Sherborne@Sunfield : an adapted approach to support social engagement of young people with ASD through Sherborne Developmental Movement' in B. Carpenter & J. Egerton (eds) *New Horizons in Special Education : Evidence-Based Practice in Action*, Clent : Sunfield Publications