

IMPROVED VOCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEAF PEOPLE*

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Educators and rehabilitation workers with the deaf have grown increasingly sensitive to the need for improved and expanded vocational training and opportunities for the deaf. They have recognized that frequently students who have left residential, day school, or other educational programs for the deaf have encountered difficulty in finding employment or may be employed in jobs which are dead-end positions or temporary in nature. Although the U. S. has made advances in a number of areas in the country to attack the unemployment problem, under-employment is particularly distressing among the deaf population. Essentially, many deaf people have excellent potential to become highly skilled and productive employees, but have little opportunity to realize this potential.

The U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1967) has estimated that each year the 3,000 deaf students over 16 years of age who terminate their special education programs in the United States find very limited further training opportunities. It states "that the top 50 percent or 1,500 of these students can benefit appreciably from further vocational training in unspecialized educational settings. Three hundred of these may go on to college, leaving an annual balance of 1,200, many of whom could improve their capabilities in appropriately reinforced programs in vocationally oriented junior colleges, area vocational schools, or residential vocational schools that serve normally hearing students." The Department also estimates that each year several hundred, who have ventured into employment directly

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from their special schools, recognize their training needs and wish to satisfy them.

The broad opportunities and variety of jobs available in the United States have not been utilized by the deaf. Of the 4,000 jobs listed in *Estimates of Worker Trait Requirements for 4,000 Jobs as Defined in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, only 577 or 14.4% list hearing and communicative skills as requisite for job performance. In other words, 85.6% of the jobs listed do not require oral communication skills (Rosenstein and Lerman, 1963).

Present educational programs for the deaf, however, are not equipped or staffed to provide for these needs. Since the existing secondary programs for the deaf are generally small in size (graduating approximately 8 to 20 students a year) and limited in resources, it is unlikely that they will be able to keep pace with the expanding industrial and commercial demands in competitive employment. In the development of vocational programs, residential and day schools for the deaf must also confront such difficulties as lack of adequately trained instructors, vocational and guidance counselors, and the acquisition and proper maintenance of necessary equipment for progressive and dynamic programs. Some schools are able "to provide vocational training in one or two areas which may serve only a small percentage of the students enrolled before these students are graduated or have left the schools to seek employment or because of age." (U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1964, p. 8). In some schools students who show promise in academic subjects are given only minimal orientation or training for a vocation and permitted to continue only in the general academic curriculum (Rosenstein & Lerman, 1963).

Many educators of the deaf also voice the opinion that schools for the deaf cannot assume the primary role in vocational training. They note that many essential academic needs for students must be considered prior to the initiation of successful vocational training. Williams (1958) cautions that since eighteen-year-old normally hearing children usually do not have sufficient maturity to make intelligent vocational choices, doubt should be raised concerning specific choices made for deaf students of similar age. Noting the weakness of vocational training in schools for the deaf, he states that "no school can more than begin to meet the training needs in the thousands of occupations in which deaf people are successful." He stresses that schools should cultivate good work attitudes and thus promote later vocational success.

At present prevocational, vocational, and technical training programs for the deaf operate in a variety of settings.

The 1964 National Workshop on Improved Opportunities for the Deaf at Knoxville, Tennessee, emphasized the great divergency which exists in the quality and offerings of the facilities and concluded that they do not adequately meet the needs of all deaf individuals in all parts of the country.

At the present time provisions have been made to provide services for two groups of students—the exceptionally bright and talented and the less independent and less able. Gallaudet College in Washington, D. C., and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, New York, are available to the brightest deaf students (an associate of arts program is also available), while a number of counseling and rehabilitation centers serve the less independent student. Although these programs are providing excellent services, they by no means provide the much larger group of deaf persons who could become highly productive workers in the mainstream of competitive employment. In a report on a National Survey conducted by Gallaudet College and the National Association of the Deaf in 1959, it was estimated that over 90% of the whole deaf population have had less than college education.

The educational needs of this larger group include vocational education training in the area of trade and technical curricula at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Only a small number of residential schools for the deaf have received high school accreditation.

The Model High School for the Deaf to be built in the Washington, D.C. region and the regional, comprehensive high schools recommended by the National Conference on the Education of the Deaf in Colorado in 1967 also pose limitations. They will not initially direct their attention to the broad age range of students which is encompassed in regional technical and vocational institutions utilizing existing instructional programs at the secondary and post-secondary levels. They will also entail far greater costs in the establishment and implementation of their programs.

In addition, although the two institutions, Gallaudet College and N.T.I.D., may broaden their programs at the junior college level, they are national rather than regional in nature. It would not be possible, therefore, for these institutions to provide either for the large number of deaf students who could qualify for shorter term programs or to be sensitive to regional employment demands.

Regional technical and vocational institutions can meet both of these problems; they are available to much larger groups of deaf people, and they are close to the economic community they are serving.

The current emphasis on the critical need for vocational

training in existing centers adapted for the needs of deaf students stems from a report to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1965. Dr. Homer Babbidge was chairman of this advisory group. This committee specifically recommended the establishment of regional post-secondary programs in vocationally oriented junior colleges, area vocational schools, and residential vocational schools. Implementation of this recommendation was suggested through present provisions under P. L. 89-333.

Presently, the University of Pittsburgh is involved in a Planning Grant (No. RD-3723-S-68, Improved Vocational Training Opportunities for Deaf People), in exploring the question of how to develop effective services for deaf people on a regional basis. Accordingly, the University of Pittsburgh research staff under the direction of Dr. William Craig is presently engaged in developing guidelines and a program of research for three participating institutions: Delgado College in New Orleans, Louisiana, and two other institutions which will serve major regional areas of the United States. The University of Pittsburgh has worked with all the participating schools in offering guidelines and suggestions in the preparation of their applications. Each of the three programs, however, will remain autonomous and can consequently provide flexible and dynamic programs utilizing its own strengths and resources.

The application from Delgado College has already been officially approved subject to budget modifications. Hopefully, all three programs which have been planned will be in operation by February, 1969. During each of the five years for which these programs have been planned the ratio of federal funds will decline in each program and the ratio of local funds will rise until the programs continue without federal support.

Delgado College and the other two participating institutions were contacted because of the success of their existing programs, their regional prominence, and their expression of interest in working with deaf students. Although each participating institution will be working within the strengths of its offerings and its regional industrial needs, a number of solutions to common problems will be shared. The University of Pittsburgh is primarily interested in encouraging and developing vehicles for this communication, and at the same time glean information which might be beneficial to other institutions in the future which may contemplate instructional modifications for the benefit of deaf people.

Although it is anticipated that the majority of students will come from the regional area or surrounding states in which the institution is located, the enrollment can be ex-

tended to any qualified deaf person in the United States.

Through the use of interpreter/tutors and with major emphasis on the use of specially-developed visual media, it is hoped that those deaf persons who might otherwise have difficulty finding purposeful employment may, through integrated vocational training, realize their potentials to become skilled, productive members of a working society.

At Delgado College, three levels of instruction will be available:

1. A certificate will be awarded to those employable in a trade but having limited duties.
2. A diploma will be awarded to those having all round knowledge of a particular trade.
3. Either the Associate in Science or the Associate in Arts Degree will be awarded to those having technical as well as all around knowledge of a highly skilled trade.

The other participating institutions will offer similar certificates, degrees, or diplomas. The amount of credit and time required for completion will vary with each program.

Upon initiation of the program at Delgado, it is anticipated that approximately 15 students will be served the first semester. In subsequent semesters, enrollment will increase progressively to a total estimated maximum capacity of one hundred students annually.

One important aspect of the program at each of the schools will be the formulation of an advisory board. The importance of such a board in programs of this type was stressed in the 1967 NACED report. Representatives of labor and industry will be encouraged to participate in meetings and support programs for the education and rehabilitation of the deaf. If industry and labor are included in the planning of programs, their expertise, background, and policies can be brought to bear on the problems; their experience will be especially useful in the development of specific instructional objectives. Of equal importance is the fact that the better acquaintanceship thus gained with the potential of deaf employees can lead to broader vocational opportunities.

Individuals entering the programs will include deaf or profoundly hard of hearing students who are eligible under their state rehabilitation plans and anyone who, in the opinion of the admissions committee, will benefit from the training. Prospective students will be referred to the college after their eligibility has been established by their respective state rehabilitation agencies.

Although the initial standards or guidelines are being developed on an anticipated reading floor of fifth grade achieve-

ment, the basis for selection will be closely related to both the student's potential and interest and to the institution's capability to provide an effective program.

1. *Evaluation.*

All supporting material, including basic information, testing data, medical work-up, educational background, family membership, and an interest and personality inventory, will be furnished to the admissions committee. This committee will be responsible not only for admission, but will give a final review of the student's progress and make recommendations for job placement.

After the admissions committee has determined the acceptance of the student into the program, the project director will refer all pertinent information to the rehabilitation counselor, advising him of the action of the committee. The counselor will then prepare a rehabilitation plan in keeping with the planning activities proposed by the admissions committee, including the student's reporting date and services which are to be scheduled while the student is in the program.

Four possibilities for student instruction will be available: (a) instruction with no modifications, (b) regular class attendance with supportive tutoring, (c) regular class attendance with interpreting and tutoring, (d) special instructional classes for deaf students only. Special supportive services such as programmed instruction would fall in this category.

2. *Counseling.*

Counseling and guidance of deaf students will be given careful consideration. Although each student will be asked to indicate a vocational goal prior to admission, it is fully recognized that adequate vocational information may not be available to the applicant. Provisions for information giving, job sampling, and career planning will be necessary. In addition, these counseling services will be available to help deaf students gain a better perspective of the world in which they live. Personal adjustment, community responsibility, social and work attitudes, and related factors will be given attention. As with the direct instructional area, both the vocational and community living aspects will be developed.

3. *Personal and Social Adjustments.*

Each program will attempt to achieve social integration of the deaf students with the student body. Small classes and individual advising sessions allow a student to discuss his

plans with his instructors. Each student will be encouraged to attend all functions, participate in all recreational and sports activities, serve on the Student Council, and engage in all other student activities when he so desires.

His major advisor and student committees will serve as the initial stimulus to help the deaf student enter these activities. To promote social adjustment for students who cannot successfully participate in and complete their programs, recommendations will be made for consideration of an on-the-job situation commensurate with the student's best interests, or a transfer to other educational facilities providing levels of training essential to the student's needs and capabilities.

4. *Continued Academic Preparation.*

Supportive education will feature reinforcement and strengthening of academic and vocational subject matter. Essentially, the supportive services will function on a laboratory basis where the student can be scheduled in the facility shop areas to reinforce and strengthen the academic and vocational training material learned in the regular training program. These services will be provided concurrently with the regular training under the direction of the vocational advisor. Supportive education will include remedial work, as required, in math, vocabulary development, and communication skills, including fingerspelling, oral communication, and correspondence.

5. *Vocational Training.*

A pre-vocational orientation coursework will be a conglomerate so far as curriculum is concerned. This training will offer instruction in the actual use of shop tools and equipment and simultaneously provide effective introduction to shop terminology used in the regular occupational or subsequent vocational training. On-the-job safety training will be taught and emphasized as the student progresses. It will also be a survey course, because it will offer occupational information skills, including fingerspelling, oral communication, and job applications, career objectives and advancement potentials, as well as field trips to various industries and businesses.

The vocational training program will be closely coordinated, and the student's progress will be evaluated as he proceeds. Once in the classroom, he will attend regular classes with hearing students. If needed, the student will receive instruction and take part in discussions through interpretation by a qualified instructor/interpreter. Students will also have

the advantage of prepared transcriptions and special work sheets.

Plans are being made for continuing in-service training programs conducted for the professional staff directly involved with the education and training of deaf students. This program will include an orientation to the purposes and scope of the project, introduction to psychosocial aspects of deafness, and the fundamentals of communication with the deaf.

6. *Placement and Follow-up Services.*

The participating institutions will work closely with the various state vocational rehabilitation agencies in providing job placement and follow-up services on a regional basis.

In addition, close cooperation with industry in coordinating on-the-job training for students who cannot pursue advanced training, but may continue to benefit from the academic, remedial, and psychosocial services of the program, will be carried on. If it is feasible for the student to be placed in on-the-job training with a concurrent continuation of program services, the teaching faculty will work closely with counselors in developing such a program.

7. *Research.*

The initiation of three new programs serving deaf people provides unusual opportunity for systematic and meaningful research. Research and development will be a cooperative venture between the University of Pittsburgh, the program chairmen in the institutions, and the existing personnel. This effort will be coordinated by the University of Pittsburgh; however, each of the programs is encouraged to initiate its own research in addition to that specifically stated in the research component.

The general research framework will consist of four types of studies—descriptive, program and process experimentation, evaluation, and prediction. Each of these research approaches will be used to develop studies in the vocational area, the special instructional area, and the area of psychosocial adjustment. During the first year, data collection for future analysis will be mainly centered around these four areas: 1. Communication. 2. Education. 3. Personal-social orientation. 4. Vocational training and placement.

The ultimate aims of this research are:

1. To develop a systematic program of research to evaluate the effectiveness and increase the efficiency of the participating institutions in this project.

2. To disseminate the findings of the research as it relates to the improvement of vocational training for deaf students in other facilities.
3. To develop guidelines for the establishment of programs for the deaf in other regional technical-vocational schools using the experience of the participating schools and junior colleges in this project.

It is hoped that the implementation of these regional technical-vocational programs for the deaf will help to meet the increasing needs of the deaf community to find more satisfying and rewarding employment.

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