Postsecondary Deaf Education in China: Trends and Future Directions

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Research 2002-2004: PRC
- Two year qualitative study
- Document postsecondary deaf education in the PRC & provide data for 11th Five-Year Plan

38 Participants Interviewed
- college & school for the deaf administrators (17)
- government administrators (3)
- college faculty (1 deaf, 6 hearing)
- deaf college students (5)
- pre-college deaf teachers (3)
- deaf college alumni (3)
Total - 11 deaf & 27 hearing

Important Government Goal
- To represent and protect the rights of persons with disabilities to participate in society with equal status and opportunities, in education and work.
- Serving disabled people is the “sign of a progressive and civilized society.”

Cultural Values – China
- Social Harmony
- Strong Family and Community Responsibility
- Individual Responsibility
- Societal Encouragement
- Lifelong Education and Learning

Economic Context
- Rapid transition to market economy
- Resources limited
- High unemployment
- Strong central government control
- Weak non-government organizations
- Emphasis upon efficiency and productivity puts deaf students at competitive disadvantage
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Deaf Education: Government Role

- National, provincial, and local 5-year plans for economic and social development
  - 9th (1996-2000) focus on compulsory deaf education (1-9 grades)
  - 10th (2001-2005) focus on preschool and high school deaf education

Deaf Education: Compulsory Level

- 20.57 Million deaf and hard-of-hearing (HoH)
- Rapid 20 year increase in deaf/HoH education at compulsory level
  - 1988 less than 6% educated
  - 2004 over 80% educated
- Currently 170,000 deaf/HoH students in 615 compulsory schools
  - 52% mainstreamed
  - 48% special classes or school for the deaf

Deaf Education: Upper Secondary

- Upper secondary education for deaf students underdeveloped
  - Close to 100 schools serving about 6,000 deaf students
- Two/Three year goal: 15 new upper secondary schools for the deaf
- Mainstreamed students have no formal support services

Goal: Improve Upper Secondary Education

- “Deaf people can do better jobs such as electronic area work. However because the basic level education in math and physics is poorly developed, students cannot take more difficulty courses at college level” (Deaf respondent)

Deaf Education: Tertiary

- Post-secondary deaf education is new but quickly growing
- Approximately 1,000 deaf/HoH college students currently
- 4 University programs and approximately 20 Junior college programs

Tertiary Programs

- 4 University programs admit students from across China
  - Admission highly competitive
  - Tianjin Technical College for the Deaf of Tianjin University of Technology
  - The Special Education Colleges of
    - Changchun University
    - Beijing Union University
- Other programs are Junior Colleges
  - Most of the students have no upper secondary degree
  - Many are so new they do not yet have graduates
**Goal: Improve College Entrance Exams**

"The college entrance exam is the directing stick."

(College administrator)

"As a college we want students with comprehensive knowledge while high schools focus on having more students pass the college entrance exam."

(College administrator)

- Need to increase the level of college entrance exams
- Because teachers teach only what is on the exam,
- Exams designed by each college need to be broadened.

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**Majors: Trends and Realities**

Primarily art and computers (15 to 16 majors)

1. Majors based upon "Suitability"
   - Visual
   - Communication
   - Academic ability (lack of prerequisite knowledge)
   - Market demand
2. Expectations are rising:
   "College teachers now know that deaf students study skills are very strong. They have a new way of looking at deaf students."

(Deaf respondent)

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**Goal: Create New College Opportunities for Deaf People**

- Wider range of majors for deaf students
- Offer higher degrees for deaf students
- Establish programs in more regions
- Provide support services such as interpreters for access to mainstream classes.
- Create transition programs to Bachelor degree programs

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**Accommodations: Trends and Realities**

- Segregated classes
- Curriculum modification
- Interpreting/Signing in class only
- Tutoring by hearing peers and faculty
- Programming for social interaction
- Highlighting deaf role models
- Orientation for hearing faculty and students (be patient and helpful)

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**Faculty**

- New to deaf education
  "...many of these teachers have never had any contact with deaf students before"
  (College administrator)
- Very few Deaf faculty
- Enthusiastic learners

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**Faculty Qualifications: Trends and Realities**

- Content degree requirements are rising.
- Requirements to take education and special education courses are rising.
- Beginning level Signed Chinese is encouraged--limited formal courses.
Educational Communication: Trends and Realities

- Multiple sign and spoken dialects
- College level policies
  - Need for government guidelines
- Training and evaluation approaches vary
- Few college incentives for fluent signing
- CDPF Beijing sign language competitions

Goal: Improve Resources & Access

- Obtain updated software and textbooks
- Increase computer access
- Increase study space
- Improve support services

The Role of Sign Language in Education

- Role of sign language is strongly debated
- Deaf stress sign, hearing stress multiple methods
- Beginning interest in bilingual/bicultural ideas.
  "In China we are talking about bilingual and bicultural. Now many people come to agreement instead of arguing and debating…." (College administrator)

Goal: Improve Faculty Training

- Colleges need to;
  "…hire teachers who have high level of competence, responsibility and proficiency in sign language." (Deaf respondent)
  - Better knowledge about deaf people and improve sign language training
  - Improved teaching strategies – more creative, more individualized, more visual and more sharing
  - Emphasize increased quality of education

Jobs: The Marketplace

- Government quotas (each unit must hire about 1.5% of employees with disabilities)
- Welfare factories for deaf employees
- Difficult to partner for work experience

Jobs: Suggestions

- College owned factories for experience
- Government incentives for industry/education partnerships
- Education industry partnership in curriculum design
- Job fairs
- Intensive societal education
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**Chinese Association of the Deaf**

- Volunteer positions
  - Limited authority or power
  - Receive money each year for activities
  - Activities are primarily for pleasure

  "CDPF and the Deaf association don’t communicate well… They don’t know each other. The communication is very difficult." (Deaf Leader)

**Learn from Experience and Accomplishments of Deaf People**

- Organized feedback from graduates
- Partnership with the Deaf Community
- Increased number of faculty who are deaf
- Use of deaf people as cultural mediators

**Highlight Deaf Role Models**

- Show videotapes of successful deaf models in many fields
- Create such videotapes within China or with Chinese deaf abroad
- Have conversations via teleconference with successful deaf individuals

**Goal: Increase Government Support**

- Funding and resources
  "…a college needs less control by the local region…"
  "You have to go through layers and layers of approval [for change]."
  (Deaf respondent)
- More college autonomy
- Promote public awareness of deaf people’s abilities

**Goal: National & International Contacts**

  "Increase the interaction and cooperation of local, regional, and international cooperation in the field of deaf education."
  (College administrator)

  - Teacher/faculty exchanges
  - Connect with Deaf community organizations
  - Research initiatives

**Conclusion**

- Changes must be considered within the historical, economic, and cultural context of China
- Rapid progress is occurring
- Faculty, administrators, students and government administrators have excellent ideas for improvement
- Deaf people need to be brought into the dialogue and decision making process

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