



## Postsecondary Education for People Who are Deaf in China: An Interview Study

Patricia A. Mudgett-DeCaro, Yufang Liu, James J. DeCaro and Jun Hui Yang

### Abstract

**Research purpose:** At the request of Director Bao of Tianjin Technical College for the Deaf of Tianjin University of Technology, PEN International began a series of interviews in China in order to gather ideas that can be used to improve post-secondary education of deaf persons in China. These suggestions will be used by the leaders in deaf education in China to help in the formulation of their proposal for the 11<sup>th</sup> Five-year Plan for education.

**Respondents:** In-depth interviews began in November of 2002 with a group of administrators from the college programs for deaf students who had gathered in Tianjin for PEN-International regional training seminars. In addition a group of administrators and teachers from one of the China schools for the deaf was interviewed. Further, a Deaf community leader was interviewed by teleconference, and two members of the Tianjin China Disabled Person's Federation (CDPF) in December of 2002 were interviewed during a later visit to the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at the Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester NY, USA (NTID at RIT). A total of 20 interviews are completed to date. Additional interviews are now being planned Deaf community leaders and college faculty.

**Methodology:** Semi-structured pilot interviews were conducted before the trip with Chinese college students, deaf and hearing, at NTID by Patricia Mudgett-DeCaro, a qualitative researcher, and Yufang Liu, a PEN-International research associate, fluent in Chinese and English. Interview questions were honed and research interview procedures rehearsed during these pilot interviews. The final interview protocol was approved by Dr. J. DeCaro, director of PEN-International and by Director Bao.

The same two researchers conducted the interviews in China with Yufang Liu acting as both colleague and interpreter. Interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed by Ms. Liu. The interview with the Deaf community leader was conducted with Junhui Yang, a doctoral student at Gallaudet College who is fluent in Chinese Sign Language who assisted with interpreting and interview analysis.

Questions were framed as a result of a review of literature regarding deaf education in China. Interview questions focused upon: a. the histories of each institution with regard to deaf education programs; b. the role of government in the educational process; c. the uniqueness of the college and the programming, including rationale for the majors offered; d. college entrance process; e. faculty characteristics and qualifications; f. support services, communication, and teaching approaches; g. partnerships with schools for the deaf, other university programs, employers, and/or the Deaf community; h. characteristics of deaf college students; and i. jobs obtained and the job acquisition process. Respondents were queried as regards challenges that they face in the education of deaf college students. They were also asked to suggest improvements that should be made in the future. Analyses were performed using standard interview coding procedures and Atlas-TI software.

Findings: The following PowerPoint slides offer a summary of the interview results to date. These findings reflect primarily the views of college administrators. Findings were grouped into the following categories: a. perceptions and definitions of deafness/people who are deaf; b. programs and majors; c. college entrance; d. college, faculty, and government roles in deaf education; e. accommodations; f. relationship to other disability groups; g. jobs; and h. challenges/goals.



# **Postsecondary Education for People Who are Deaf in China: An Interview Study**

**Patricia Mudgett-DeCaro, Yufang Liu  
James J. DeCaro, Jun Hui Yang**

**National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology**  
PEN-International is funded by grants from The Nippon Foundation of Japan to NTID



1

## Research Purposes:

- Document postsecondary deaf education in China
- Provide data for development of the 11<sup>th</sup> 5-year Plan of the People Republic of China



1

2

## Current Participants

- 11 college administrators from deaf education programs
- 6 administrators from schools for the deaf
- One deaf community leader
- Two government administrators

**Future Participants: Faculty and Deaf community leaders**

2

3

## Context

- High school deaf education is underdeveloped.
- Very few deaf students are integrated with no formal support services (for example, interpreting and notetaking).
- Postsecondary deaf education is new and quickly evolving.

3

4

## Context (cont.)

- Many tertiary programs do not have graduates yet.
- Deaf community is becoming more organized, visible, and knowledgeable.
- Education programs solicit little feedback from deaf community or alumni as yet, but it is increasing.

4

5

## Deaf Education: Government Role

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

5

6

## China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF)

- Established in 1988
- "...national organization of and for persons with various categories of disabilities in China..." (CDPF administrator)
- Responsibilities:
  - Implementing government policies
  - Represent disabled people

6

7

## Faculty

- New to deaf education
- Very few Deaf faculty
- Enthusiastic learners

"...many of these teachers have never had any contact with deaf students before"  
(College administrator)



2001 Training at NTID

7

8

## Faculty: Qualifications

- Content degree requirements are rising.
- Requirements to take education and special education courses are rising.
- Beginning level Signed Chinese is encouraged but rarely taught.

8

9

## Faculty: Roles/Responsibilities

- Overall goal is
  - "...shortening the distance between deaf and hearing students."  
(College administrator)
  - Teach content
  - Teach social skills and citizenship
  - Foster deaf/hearing interaction

9

10

## Positive Assumptions

- Deaf students are highly motivated to learn
  - Respondents agreed that "...many deaf high school students have and have expressed a strong desire to continue to go to college after they graduate." (High school administrator)
- Deaf students have very strong visual ability
  - "Deaf students can't hear but they have strong visual ability...in visual art field, deaf students and hearing students are equal."  
(College administrator)

10

11

## Limiting Assumptions

- Deaf students need social interaction to learn social skills and "... how to be a responsible person... how to live a life in the hearing world." (Disability Office Administrator)
- Deaf students are concrete thinkers.  
"Their strength is their concrete visual sensitivity, their ability to imitate and at art... but their logic and abstract thinking is way behind hearing students." (College administrator)

11

12

## Accommodations

- 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)

12

13

## Majors and Jobs

Why are choices of a Major limited?

- "Suitability"
  - Visual
  - Communication
  - Academic ability (lack of high school level knowledge)
- Low expectations, but sometimes deaf students' achievements surprised the faculty:  
"College teachers now know that deaf students study skills are very strong. They have a new way of looking at deaf students." (Deaf respondent)

13

14

## Majors and Jobs (cont.)

- Majors tied to market demands  
"At the beginning when we are thinking about majors we are taking the employment situation and what is suitable for them into consideration." (College administrator)
- Government quotas (each unit must hire about 1.5% of employees with disabilities)

14

15

## Goal: Improve High School 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)

- Need to increase teacher training
- Need a standard text
- Establish more high schools for the deaf

"We do not have enough high schools of the deaf." (College administrator)

15

16

## 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.

16

17

## 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 education
- Improved teaching methods –more creative
- Sign language training
- More deaf teachers trained and employed

17

18

## Goal: Create new college opportunities for deaf people



Beijing Union University

- 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.

18

19

## Goal: Increase government support

- Funding and resources
- More college autonomy
- Publicize deaf people to society

"... a college needs less control by the local region..."  
"You have to go through layers and layers of approval [for change]." (Deaf respondent)

19

20

## 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

20