

Tertiary Deaf Education in China: Self-Contained Colleges in Mainstream Universities



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Research Purposes:

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

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Inclusion: in Chinese Society

- Goal: To represent and protect the lawful rights of persons with disabilities to participate in society with equal status and opportunities, through the equal rights to education and work.

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38 Participants Interviewed

- 11 college administrators from deaf education programs
- 6 administrators from schools for the deaf
- 3 government administrators
- 3 alumni (deaf) one is teacher, one is a community leader.
- 3 teachers at pre-college level (deaf)
- 5 college students (deaf)
- 7 college faculty (one deaf, 6 hearing)

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Research Methodology

- Semi-structured interviews
- Qualitative researcher with Chinese colleagues: one hearing, one deaf
- Audio taped and videotaped
- Standard coding procedures
- Atlas-Ti software

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Questions: Focus

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ■ Institutional history | ■ Support services |
| ■ Government role | ■ Partnership |
| ■ College programs and role | ■ Student characteristics |
| ■ College entrance | ■ Jobs |
| ■ Faculty | ■ Suggestions for improvement |

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Deaf education context

- 20.57 Million deaf and hard of hearing (HoH)
- “By the end of 2003, there are 559 special schools for the deaf, 105 special schools for the students who are deaf or blind, 605 comprehensive special schools, 852 special classes for the deaf in regular school. Most special schools are boarding schools.” (CDPF Administrator, 2004)

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Deaf Education: Compulsory Level

- 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 in regular classes (no support services)
 - 48% special classes or school for the deaf

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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

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Deaf Education: Tertiary

- Post-secondary deaf education is new and quickly growing
- Approximately 1,000 deaf/HoH college students currently
- 15-16 majors offered, primarily in the art field
 - Art is a highly respected field

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Tertiary Programs

- 3 University programs admit students from all of China
 - Admission highly competitive
 - The Special Education Colleges of
 - Changchun University
 - Beijing Union University
 - Tianjin Technical College for the Deaf of Tianjin University of Technology
- All other programs are vocational, associate level.
 - Most of the students have no upper secondary degree
 - Many are so new they do not yet have graduates

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Cultural context

- Success despite adversity
 - Role models are highlighted
 - Competitions are a common way of encouraging excellence.
- Harmony
 - Focus on developing as whole person
- Group focus
 - Slowly increasing individual focus
- Strong family hierarchy
 - Parents substantial influence

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Business 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

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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

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[Chinese Association of the Deaf]

Volunteer positions

- Have no 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)

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[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

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[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.

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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

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Faculty: Roles/Responsibilities continued...

- Maintain student/faculty interactions and feedback
- Tutor
- Facilitate job contacts and employer education
- Educate society regarding deaf people's abilities and successes

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Communication

- Multiple sign and spoken dialects
- No communication policies
- No government guidance
- Training and evaluation approaches vary
- Few college incentives for fluent signing
- CDPF Beijing sign language competitions

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Chinese Sign Language (CSL)

- "deaf use word order of CSL dialect, so hearing think the deaf do not have good language but deaf think they are fine because it is correct in CSL"
- "It is very important to understand the grammar of CSL but we teach only limited time with deaf students and there are many different sign dialects."
(college administrator and faculty)

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The role of sign language in education

- Role of sign language is strongly debated
- Deaf stress sign, hearing stress multiple methods
- Which sign: CSL or Signed Chinese?
"... they have a different understanding about how do you think about sign language. Sign language, should (it) be the main language for deaf people... (or) should deaf people have their hearing people's spoken language as main language and use sign language as an assistance to facilitate them to learn the mainstreamed language?" (College administrator)

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The role of sign language in education (continued...)

- 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)

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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)

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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)

- Some respondents felt that Deaf students have low self-esteem. "Deaf students have less self-confidence... deaf students have a sense of inferiority." (College administrator)

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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)

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Majors

Primarily art and computers

Why are choices of a Major limited?

1. "Suitability"
 - Visual
 - Communication
 - Academic ability (lack of high school level knowledge)
2. 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)

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Jobs: Market

1. 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)
2. Government quotas (each unit must hire about 1.5% of employees with disabilities)
3. Welfare factories for deaf employees
4. Difficult to partner with companies for experience

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Jobs: Suggestions

- College owned factories for experience
- Government incentives for partnerships
- Job fairs

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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)

- Need to increase teacher training
- Need standard high school textbooks
- Establish more high schools for the deaf

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

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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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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, more individual, and more visual
- Sign language training
- More deaf teachers trained and employed

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Goal: Improve resources and access

- Obtain updated software and textbooks
- Increase computer access
- Increase study space

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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.
- Create transition programs to Bachelor degree programs

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Goal: Partnerships

- Create partnerships with industry for work experience
- Create partnerships with deaf community
- Create partnerships with deaf alumni

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Goal: Learning from deaf people's accomplishments

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

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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)

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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

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[Inclusion of deaf/HoH in China]

- Inclusion within the current context of China must be placed within the historical, economic, and cultural context
- Inclusion in education
- Inclusion in society
- Inclusion in the job market

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