

November 2019

Employment Practices and Trends in Industry and Their Implications for the Deaf

Earl T. Klein

*Director, Office of Evaluation and Reports Manpower Administration U. S. Department of Labor
Washington, D. C.*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.wcsu.edu/jadara>

Recommended Citation

Klein, E. T. (2019). Employment Practices and Trends in Industry and Their Implications for the Deaf. *JADARA*, 3(5). Retrieved from <https://repository.wcsu.edu/jadara/vol3/iss5/7>

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND TRENDS IN INDUSTRY AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEAF

EARL T. KLEIN

Director, Office of Evaluation and Reports
Manpower Administration
U. S. Department of Labor
Washington, D. C.

The Economic Scene in Perspective. May we start out with the platitude that we are living in an age of great and profound change in our entire social fabric. As it concerns the work-a-day world, we have seen overnight, hand tools and machine tools turn into electronically controlled operations hardly touched by hand. As it concerns the labor force, we see a new profile of the working population and a new set of attitudes and practices in the world of work.

These developments are indeed having an impact on our way of making a living today and on the jobs that we need to prepare for in the future. They obviously have and will have a profound effect on job opportunities for the deaf. We have brand new industries emerging and developing—space craft, electronic, and nuclear energy industries. We have uses of new kinds of equipment, such as electronic data processing, and fantastic products of chemistry coming into everyday use. And business and industry, as well as Government, are making tremendous investments in research and development in new plants and equipment, accelerating the many changes that have been taking place in the years past.

Not only are technological developments drastically altering the occupational and industrial picture which will affect opportunities for all, including the deaf, but other developments are having their impact too. One is the tremendous growth in population during recent years. During the period from 1900 to 1950; there was an increase in the population of the United States of about 75 million people. In the span of

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND TRENDS IN INDUSTRY AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS 2

ten years, from 1950 to 1960, there was an increase of about 30 million. In the ten-year span from 1960 to 1970, there will have been another increase of about 30 million people. So, on the one hand, there will be more consumers and hence more production, and more services needed; at the same time, there is bound to be a great deal more competition for jobs because of the growing labor force, especially due to the large contingent of youth. The deaf, like other people, must compete with these new entrants into the labor market.

In the ten years from 1960 to 1970, there will be an increase of about 13 million more workers. In the five years from 1965 to 1970, there will be three million new workers entering the labor market each year. This compares with two million a year, or a 50 per cent increase, over 1955 to 1960. During the ten-year period of the 1960's there will be 26 million more young men and women entering the labor market. There also will be about three million more housewives entering the labor market for a total of 29 million more people. Of course, there will be displacements too from deaths, retirements, etc. And so, we will have to absorb that many more job seekers (13 million in ten years) thus adding competition for the deaf for jobs.

Other changes are taking place which also affect the job market. There are changes taking place constantly in consumers tastes and preferences. The effects of television and advertising, of merchandising, of standards of living, of leisure time activities, are having a profound effect on jobs, on services, and on products that are produced.

Also, there are tremendous movements of industry. For example, when industries decide to automate, it is not unusual for them to move their plants completely from one area to another area, build a new automated plant and hire a virtually new work force. This, of course, has an effect on opportunities and possible mobility of the deaf.

Because of these technological and other developments you should be very much aware of other developments which will result. Fewer workers will be needed to produce goods, particularly because of the technological advances taking place, than will be needed to provide services—education and health services, repairs of cars and appliances, for example. In 1950, for the first time in American history, the number of workers in service industries surpassed the number in production industries, and the differential between the two has

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND TRENDS IN INDUSTRY AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

been widening ever since. In 1956, another important development took place in the American economy. For the first time in our history employment in white collar jobs surpassed employment in blue collar jobs, and here, too, the gap has been widening ever since. We find also that the requirements for higher education and higher skills are taking place in both white collar and blue collar occupations.

In order to plan vocational preparation, it is important to know not only the job opportunities and employer requirements today, but what they are likely to be tomorrow. We therefore should know what is to be expected in five or ten years ahead. Studies in the Department of Labor indicate the following trends that are taking place, barring the unforeseen.

Major Industrial Trends. Despite the increase in population and the standard of living and the need for more food and other farm products, both in America and abroad, there will be a significant decline in farm employment. It is expected that there will be over a million and a half fewer workers on the farms in 1975 than there were in 1960, due to the increased output per worker which is likely to continue.

However, employment other than farm will rise very substantially, by over a third (about 37 per cent) during the period of 1960 to 1970. There are expected to be over 23 million more workers in nonfarm occupations. With the growing demand for various services, employment in a wide and growing variety of occupations in the service industry is expected to go up by a tremendous 61 per cent.

An increase in contract construction is likely in the years ahead. More housing, schools, hospitals, roads and bridges, and industrial plants and office buildings are going up. It is anticipated that employment in the contract construction industry will increase by about 52 per cent in this 15-year period.

Greater demand for education, for public health services, for welfare services, for police and fire protection, for road maintenance, and other developments, will increase employment by state and local governments by about 50 per cent. But little change is expected in Federal employment during this period.

Despite the wider use of electronic data processing and other technological improvements, employment in finance, real estate, and insurance is expected to increase by about 44 per cent, substantially increasing the workers in banks and other financial institutions, real estate, insurance companies, etc. Employment growth in the banking industry is expected to be especially rapid. These industries certainly should offer excellent opportunities for the deaf.

4 EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND TRENDS IN INDUSTRY AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

There is expected to be a big increase also in employment in the wholesale and retail trade, about 37 per cent, despite the number of vending machines and self-service methods that are being introduced.

In spite of the increase in manufactured products to meet the demands of a greatly increased population and probably higher standards of living, employment in manufacturing industries is not expected to advance at as rapid a rate as some of the other industries. It will likely go up only about 25 per cent, or far less than the average of 37 percent in nonfarm employment, largely because of the technological advances in manufacturing. But these figures should not be misleading because there will still be far more opportunities for employment in manufacturing than in any other industry. There are expected to be something like twenty million jobs in manufacturing, the industry in which the greatest number of jobs will be available. And there should be opportunities for the deaf in all industries, including those in which there will be a decline in employment, as in agriculture. But it is important to know in which industries the greatest increases are taking place so that appropriate emphasis may be given in vocational planning for work in those industries in which the deaf are most likely to find employment opportunities.

Trends in the Labor Force Profile. Changes in industry's complex will bring changes in the occupations and worker qualifications that are found within such industries. There is clearly a trend toward a rising demand for workers with higher levels of education and skills and away from unskilled and lesser skilled occupations. This is very important to this group because, if I am accurately informed about education of the deaf, the majority of deaf people have not gone much beyond elementary school. Certainly, many, if not most, of these people are going to be doubly disadvantaged in the labor markets of today and even more so tomorrow unless there is much more education and training made available for them, and they are motivated to take such additional training and education.

As has always been shown, a much greater increase in employment in white collar occupations than in blue collar jobs is almost a certainty. For example, *white collar employment will be going up by about 46 percent between 1960-1975. Blue collar employment will also be going up, but only at the rate of about 21 percent.* The majority of deaf people have historically been employed largely in blue collar occupation; in preparing deaf student, it is now time to think in terms of white collar occupations and service jobs, as well as of blue collar work.

For the more able and advantaged of the deaf, enormous opportunity will exist in the professional and technical fields, and to a lesser extent, in management and proprietary work.

A tremendous increase—about 51 percent—is expected in service workers, practical nurses, hospital attendants, cooks, and the like—an area offering excellent possibilities for the deaf.

Today's Labor Market: Its Meaning for the Deaf. Our national economy is at the present moment enjoying an unprecedentedly high level of employment. Almost 73 million people were employed in 1966—a growth of over 7 million since the beginning of the recovery period in 1961. The unemployment rate has at the same time been dropping, from a 6.7 percent peak during 1961 to a 3.8 percent figure. Translated into human terms this means that 2,875,000 persons were unemployed during 1966. Of these, the majority were from disadvantage groups. Just so long as our unemployment roster registers in the millions, moving upward and downward with fluctuations in the economy, job seekers of all kinds, but especially those handicapped with deafness, must be prepared to compete in the job market.

At the present time, the economic climate is favorable for such job competition. Shortage of trained and skilled job applicants are softening the resistance of employers to hiring the handicapped of all types. At the same time a growing awareness is permeating the business and industrial community of its social responsibility to those previously rejected even before they were tried. We are all aware of the numerous instances in which jobs, which do not essentially require verbal communication, have opened to the deaf, who in turn have proved that these people can measure up to their non-handicapped co-workers. These jobs exist throughout the occupational spectrum—from the most highly skilled professional and technical fields, throughout the large and steadily growing white-collar clerical field, in the blue-collar domain in many of our manufacturing and other occupations, and in the growing service sector of the economy where some of our most acute occupational shortages are being felt. I might add that the Federal government, followed by State and local governments, has been exercising conspicuous leadership in extending work opportunities to handicapped persons of all types.

Job opportunities do, therefore, exist in increasingly large numbers as economic growth progresses. The bridge which must be spanned between unemployment and reaching these opportunities is that of proper qualification by the individual. This is neither more nor less true for the handicapped, including the deaf. At present, the national manpower focus is on

6 EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND TRENDS IN INDUSTRY AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

training as the mechanism to match unemployed workers with jobs. The tremendous national effort being put into manpower training can and should serve the deaf along with all others. I would direct your attention to Federally-supported training programs which can be utilized and adapted to provide opportunities to deaf people—as well as to their prospective employers.

The largest of these programs is being conducted under the Manpower Development and Training Act. (MDTA). It provides for two patterns of occupational training—institutional vocational education courses, and on-the-job training programs. To serve disadvantaged persons, these training programs provide not only occupational training but basic education training for those with inadequate educational preparation for today's job demands, as well as a number of supportive services such as counseling and health services. The institutional program operates through the network of public Employment Service (ES) offices; the on-the-job training program works through the joint efforts of the ES system, and regional offices of the Labor Department's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training. These agencies and practitioners with the deaf should know each other. *Cooperation among workers with the deaf and these agencies can uncover areas of mutual interest and open new avenues for training and job placement.* Where specialized services are required private and public agencies can work together to achieve their common goal of preparing the deaf, among others, for gainful employment and adjustment to the mainstream of economic life.

Other Federally-supported programs also offer assistance to handicapped and disadvantaged groups. The Social and Rehabilitation Service in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare is noted for its work in rehabilitation and placement of persons with various types of handicaps. Other new programs have just recently been developed as part of the national anti-poverty effort. These programs are designed basically to provide training and work experience to poverty stricken youth and adults. They include the National Youth Council (NYC) which serves the needs of impoverished youth, and a group of adult work training and experience programs to serve the adult impoverished. They are coordinating all governmental and community resources to the extent possible to maximize the effort to alleviate and eventually eliminate joblessness and poverty. Since the deaf are not excluded from the poverty population, these programs also fall within our sphere of interest. Just as in the case of the MDTA program, communication might be established with

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND TRENDS IN INDUSTRY AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS 7

the Department of Labor's Bureau of Work Programs which administers these programs. Regional offices have been established in a number of our major cities across the country; district representatives also have been designated to serve smaller geographic areas.

Finally, the Manpower Development and Training Act has important and extensive provisions for experimental and demonstration projects designed to test new approaches to the manpower problems of groups with particular difficulties in achieving employability. Those who are research-and-demonstration-minded in the area of manpower problems may find it worthwhile to explore this facet with the Office of Manpower Policy, Evaluation and Research in the Department of Labor.

To summarize, the job market has been opening more and more to an acceptance of handicapped persons on an equal basis with all others. This is a recognition—based on experience—that these people make good workers. Given good solid qualification, the deaf should be able to enter increasingly into a myriad of jobs, including many of those emerging from the new technology and the growing demand for services, where their handicap is either not a deterrent satisfactory work performance, or rehabilitative steps can be taken to make an acceptable adjustment. The economic and social climate is now conducive to a further breakthrough in the rigidities of attitudes which previously prevailed. The handicapped must be prepared through education, training, and personal adjustment to take advantage of this trend of the times. Many resources are available for their use in becoming fully qualified for participation in the labor force.

Summary and Suggestions. A number of things must be borne in mind by today's manpower practitioners—some of them applicable to all workers, others particularly to the deaf. The following guidelines for practitioners come to mind as among the most important:

1. Know your own localities and regions including the trends in job opportunities and their educational and skill requirements. Also know about the skills and jobs on the decline.
2. Prepare the deaf to understand and be prepared for the common practice of pre-employment and pre-training testing which is growing more widespread. Many such tests assume normal communication facility. The deaf will need special assistance to enable them to take and perform on these tests. It must be remembered, also, that tests can screen both "in" and "out" when they are designed to show particu-

8 EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND TRENDS IN INDUSTRY AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

- lar aptitudes for a range of opportunity.
3. The need for more education and training and more realistic education and training, geared to the needs of the changing job market, cannot be overemphasized. This is true at virtually all levels of education—at the high school level, vocational schools, technical schools, junior colleges and colleges. Unless deaf people get additional education and training required by jobs and employers, their chances for surviving in the labor market will be reduced.
 4. There is a need to train for occupations in which there is the most critical demand for workers. The more an employer needs a skill, the more likely he is to accept a trained and qualified deaf person.
 5. To the extent possible, the deaf should be better and more thoroughly trained than hearing persons in order to comfortably meet job competition.
 6. There is a need for training in broad skills rather than for single specialities in order to permit flexibility and adjustment to fast-changing jobs. There is a related need for the psychological preparation of the deaf for changes in jobs so that when a change occurs, the deaf worker will understand the necessity of mastering a new skill or occupation.
 7. There is a vital need for a better means to appraise the aptitudes, interests, and traits of deaf persons. This appraisal should lead to depth counseling so that deaf people can be helped to plan and prepare for the kind of work that is most suitable for them, and in which they are most likely to progress. Adequate and realistic appraisal and counseling should help the deaf choose, prepare for, and follow occupations that not only offer opportunities for employment but ones that are particularly in accord with their interests and capacities.
 8. There is a need to reach undereducated adults and to provide them with the needed language and mathematical skills that are so important in today's labor market. Otherwise, they will be lost in the fast-changing labor market that we are experiencing today.
 9. There is potential in exploring the greater use of on-the-job training and the combination of work and training in order to facilitate the adjustment of the deaf person to the work situation. This would assist the deaf person in working with hearing persons, and in practical application of his training.

10. There is a need to help the deaf develop personal traits employers are so widely seeking in the persons they hire. With so many employers, these are even more important than the skills the worker brings to the job. Employers are interested particularly in workers who have a deep sense of responsibility, maturity, dependability, punctuality, judgment, flexibility, and ability to get along with others. Deaf persons who possess these traits as well as having the required skills and education are much more readily placed and, at the same time, can do a great deal to improve the employer's image of the deaf.
11. Finally, it is important to teach deaf students how to go after jobs. Possibly, this could be done through group guidance sessions, role playing and other means, but essentially they will need to be taught where and how to look for work, how to fill out an application, what grooming is needed to make a favorable impression on the employer, what references are needed and how to present their qualifications during the employment interview.

These guidelines present only a part of this employment picture for deaf people. But it is constructive to start with the premise that there is hardly a person willing to be trained who cannot be prepared for suitable employment when enough effort and imagination are put into it.