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JOB DEVELOPMENT, FINDING, AND ASSESSMENT FOR THE DEAF WORKER

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Job development, job finding and work assessment are subjects of great complexity because of the many factors involved, particularly with respect to effective work opportunities for deaf people. This presentation will be limited to a definition and diagnosis of the problems rather than exploring various professional approaches to the problems. It is not really necessary to cite data and studies supportive of the well established fact that the unemployment, under-employment, and "misemployment" of the deaf is a serious problem—one that has too long been permitted to persist.

A close examination of the statistical picture for one state, Oregon, can serve to define the employment problems of deaf persons. The deaf and seriously hearing impaired population of this state is estimated to be 1,900 persons. The Research and Statistics section of the Public Welfare Commission advises that there are currently 175 deaf persons on the welfare rolls, or more than 9 percent of the population, while the percentage of the general population on the rolls is .08 percent. During the past several years the employment problems of the deaf have been the theme of study and discussion at several national and regional conferences, but there has not been any significant progress in the effort to arrive at adequate definitions and diagnoses of those factors responsible for this condition of unemployment, under-employment, and misemployment. It is evident that it is not possible to prescribe for an ailment, or to develop effective remedial programs and methods for the correction of a problem, without first recognizing, defining, and diagnosing the ailment, or the problem.

Some of the factors to be considered in relation to employment problems of the deaf may be organized under the following categories:

1. **Factors Relating to the Deaf Job Applicant**

- Communication ability
- Job preparation, education, vocational training, and work experience
- “Job Seeking” training
- Knowledge of principal elements of a wide range of jobs, industrial practices, and work situation concepts.
- Level of needs of individual
- Psychological characteristics
 - Intelligence
 - Aptitudes
 - Interests and motivation
 - Level of aspiration
 - Attitudes (realistic quality of, in relation to ambitions, desires, and job-related responsibilities)
 - Self-concept
 - Psychosocial adjustment
 - Time perspective
- Physical factors
 - Capabilities and limitations
 - Multiple handicaps

2. **Factors Relating to Potential Employers of Deaf People**

- Lack of factual knowledge and information in regard to the deaf.
- Misconceptions relevant to the effect of the conditions of deafness and hearing impairment on the ability of the deaf person to function adequately in a work situation.
- Misconceptions in regard to the effect of the employment of deaf persons on the employers' insurance protection costs, State Industrial Accident coverage, etc.
- Misconceptions and misinformation in relation to the hazard factor resultant from the condition of hearing impairment and deafness.

- Resistance expressed by company training and supervisory personnel.
 - Lack of interest or concern - the “Why should we?” attitude.
3. Factors Relating to Professional Workers with the Deaf
- Educators of the deaf and their responsibilities
 - Counselors of the deaf in schools for the deaf, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Public Employment Service, and Public Welfare Service offering specific services.
 - Researchers in the area of the deaf.

By using this set of categories, the interaction of factors related to job development, finding, and assessment can be organized.

Referring now to Category 1, the Deaf Job Applicant, it is evident that research, the development of assessment instruments, and the formulation of corrective and remedial programs are matters requiring primary consideration if the deaf person is to be successful in his effort to secure, retain, and progress in employment.

Category 2, Factors Relating to Potential Employers, is an area in which little effort has been expended. A recent survey of 480 major labor market employers (that is, firms employing more than 50 persons) yielded the following responses:

- 15% indicated that they presently employ one or more deaf persons, or had done so in the past.
- 21½% stated that they would not consider hiring a deaf job applicant. Among the various reasons for not hiring deaf applicants, 73% pointed to safety hazards, 13% indicated the communication problem, and 14% indicated miscellaneous reasons, such as objections of supervisory personnel, and problems involved in training.

It is interesting to note that 71% of the employers in the total survey indicated that they would have no objection to hiring deaf persons, but conditioned this by adding “if the applicants were qualified to perform the work.” A substantial percentage of those indicating they would have no objection, also stated that they had no record or recollection of having had deaf job applicants. As a point of contrast, approximate-

ly 85% who had employed deaf workers evaluated their performance as from good to excellent. Approximately 15% evaluated their performance as poor to fair.

These figures would seem to indicate that:

- Those employers who do employ the deaf are, for the most part, pleased with their performance.
- Many employers are uninformed or misinformed in regard to the deaf.
- Most employers would be willing to hire the deaf if they were qualified.
- A large percentage of employers have not been approached in regard to hiring deaf applicants by either the deaf applicant or the professional workers with the deaf.

Referring to Category 3, Factors Relating to Professional Workers with the Deaf, educators of the deaf are placed at the top of the list for the simple reason that the educational and vocational training achievement level of the deaf adult is the end product of the interaction between the student and the educator. The principal purpose of education and training is generally understood to be the preparation of the individual to realize his maximum potential as a member of the community and as an economically self-dependent person. To admit that the deaf are not receiving adequate preparation to achieve such potential is to admit to deficiencies in the programs and methods of educating the deaf. Conversely, to claim that the educational procedures used with deaf students does prepare them to achieve their maximum potential is to imply that the deaf have, in fact, a low achievement potential. Many studies tend to refute such implication and strongly suggest that the desired goals in the education and training of the deaf are not being achieved.

Counselors in schools for the deaf have a high level of responsibility in vocational guidance of students, particularly those in the upper grades, in assisting these students in making decisions about vocational objectives. Lunde and Bigman (1959) state that "In general, most of those studying a trade have never followed it." It would appear that this is a consequence either of inept counseling, or of the lack of adequate instruments for the assessing of those factors relevant to effective vocational decision making.

Vocational rehabilitation counselors, Employment Service counselors, and counselors in other settings have certain clearly defined handicaps in working with deaf clients. Only

a few of these counselors are capable of communicating adequately with the deaf client. Effective counseling depends on developing skills which permit the counselor and the counselee to communicate freely.

Few counselors understand the various personality characteristics of the deaf people to permit effective counseling. Many counselors are prone to categorize the deaf person as a "type" rather than as individuals. In some states, there are a few DVR and Employment Service counselors who are trained as specialists to serve deaf clients. Some of these successful counselors are sensitive to the needs of deaf people and are proficient in manual communication. However, even these few exceptional counselors are severely handicapped by the lack of assessment and predictive instruments that are constructed and validated, or standardized for the deaf, to assess the clients aptitudes, interests, and personality factors relevant to satisfactory vocational adjustment. Most counseling now results, not from assessment data, but rather on intuition and past experience. A study by Berger, Craig and Holdt (1967), currently in progress, is directed toward the construction and validation of tests for use with the deaf in the counseling process. It is anticipated that the test battery being developed will be available to counselors in various settings and that these tests will serve as effective tools in "selling" the deaf client to the employer.

On the basis of this decision, the factors relevant to the employment status of the deaf might be summarized as follows:

1. Education and training programs must be developed that will better equip the student to meet the requirements necessary for entry into the competitive labor market. Administration and development of such programs are the joint responsibility of educators of the deaf, counselors of the deaf in various counseling settings, representatives from state Employment Service, industry and labor, institutions of higher learning, and especially of researchers in the area of the deaf.
2. Opportunity for better job training and preparation, and more effective counseling in those matters that relate to securing and retaining employment, must be made available to the adult deaf worker.
3. Educational publicity programs must be developed and implemented to better inform potential employers on matters relating to the employment of deaf

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persons, and to correct those misconceptions that contribute to the employer's reluctance to hire deaf applicants. Inasmuch as employers are profit motivated, they generally hire those applicants who they believe can most readily and economically be trained to perform the job, and whose work performance will best assist them in realizing a profit. Extensive and intelligent efforts must be focused on the potential employer to eradicate those factors which constitute barriers to the hiring of deaf job applicants and to advancement or promotion on the job.

4. Professional workers with the deaf, whose function it is to prepare the deaf adult for entry into the labor market and to assist him to secure satisfactory employment, have failed. This may be due to lack of the special training and the specialized knowledge required, being unaware of the nature of the problems involved, or lack of sincere interest in serving the deaf client, or perhaps a combination of these reasons. More counselors, and counselors with more adequate training, are needed if the employment status of the deaf is to be improved.
5. A higher degree of cooperation must be developed between those public and private agencies whose function it is to be concerned with the welfare of the deaf. These agencies would include DVR, Public Employment Service, State Welfare Departments, privately endowed rehabilitation agencies, schools for the deaf, research persons, and institutions of higher learning.
6. Broader research, and more meaningful research must be focused on all factors relevant to the employment status of the deaf.

In final summation, it should be emphasized that effective remedial and corrective programs can be planned and developed, but they cannot be implemented without the connecting link between the deaf client and the solution in this problem. That link is the counselor. Therefore, it is imperative that a sufficient number of adequately trained counselors be made available to serve deaf clients.

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- Berger, David G., Craig, William N., and Holdt, T. J., Oregon Vocational Research Project for the Deaf, currently in progress.