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CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR DEAF ADULTS (CEPDA)[†]

By GILBERT L. DELGADO, Ph.D., Dean, Graduate School; CAROL J. BOGGS, Special Assistant to the Vice President, Gallaudet College

Adult education for the deaf is perhaps more neglected than any other area in the field.¹ The Babbidge Report recommended in 1965 that the deaf be given access to the full range of post-secondary and adult education available to the general population.² In 1967, the National Conference on the Education of the Deaf recommended enhanced opportunities in colleges and universities, junior colleges, technical schools, vocational schools, and adult education programs.³ In May 1970, The Committee on the Role and Function of Gallaudet College completed a study of the future role of the College and the nature of problems faced by deaf persons in this country. The committee contended that:

Deaf adults generally do not receive advancement on their jobs to the same degree as hearing people of comparable ability, nor do they usually participate fully in a free society. Contributing to these and related problems is the lack of opportunity for

[†]Presented by Carol J. Boggs

¹Thomas A. Mayes, "Summary of Conference", in *A Report on the Conference for Teachers and Interpreters in Adult Education for the Deaf*, p. 36. *Adult Education Programs for the Deaf*, Henry O. Bjorlie, et al, eds., (San Fernando Valley State College, Northridge, California, March 19, 1966) p. 36.

²*Advisory Committee on the Education of the Deaf*, Homer D. Babbidge, Chairman, *Education of the Deaf – A Report to the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare*, (Washington: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of the Secretary, March 1965) p. 43.

³U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, *Education of the Deaf – The Challenge and the Charge, A Report of the National Conference on the Education of the Deaf*, Colorado Springs, Colorado, April 12-15, 1967, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), p. 115.

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continuing education and self improvement. Gallaudet has an obligation to fill this void.⁴

With this background, the college requested \$128 thousand for a small continuing education program for the National Capital Region in Fiscal Year 1971. While House-Senate conferees deleted this item from the 1971 Budget, they requested that the Department of Health, Education and Welfare make a thorough study of the need for an adult education program for deaf persons, the level of financing necessary, and the manner in which such a program might be administered.⁵ Accordingly, a task force was convened by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and later in the fiscal year (March, 1971) it submitted a final report. The report recommended that Gallaudet College serve as the focal point in the initiation of a broadly-based nationwide program of continuing education for deaf adults. It recommended further that this effort be made in concert with other institutions with existing and developing programs of continuing education for deaf adults.⁶ This concept developed by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare Task Force was strongly endorsed soon afterward by the Board of Fellows of Gallaudet College.

Gallaudet College is responding to the charge contained in the HEW Task Force Report with this proposal for a Continuing Education Program for Deaf Adults (CEPDA). The program will provide deaf adults with increased opportunities and encouragement for participation in continuing education programs by capitalizing on programs which now exist and by developing new programs where needed.

The thrust of CEPDA is to make use of existing programs, integrating where possible deaf and hearing people. This program will provide a catalytic function and a multiplying effect for accelerating the development of continuing education programs for deaf adults on a nationwide basis.

An analysis of America's traditional education systems would look like this (Figure 1). Prior to the twentieth century, there were limited options available to the student, one school system with a single, rather rigid curriculum.

During the past few decades however, alternate paths have been developed which allow the individual a variety of options in acquiring the proficiencies expected of him at the various levels (Figure 2).

⁴*A New Era for Gallaudet College, Report of the Committee on Role and Function of Gallaudet College as an Institution of Higher Learning For the Deaf, Mary E. Switzer, Chairman, May 1970.*

⁵*Report of a Study of the Need for a Continuing Education Program for Deaf Persons. Washington, D.C.: Department of Health, Education and Welfare, March 19, 1971.*

⁶*Congressional Report No. 91-1729, "Special Institutions", p. 10.*

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Thus, there are extensive opportunities available for the continuing education of adults, and programs have grown in response to the demand for them. No one today seriously questions the need for continuing education. In comparing the educational expectations and opportunities of the general hearing population with those of the deaf community, however, it is readily obvious that double standards exist both in aspiration and in access.

In recent years America has made great strides in discovering ways to provide more nearly adequate elementary and secondary education to deaf persons and to help them compensate for their sensory handicap. At best, however, there exists but a single educational path (limited option), a path from which thousands of deaf students exit each year without recourse to either alternative programs specifically designed for them or arrangements made for participation (Figure 3) at some level in programs designed essentially for the hearing.

Adult education of the deaf is not a new idea. Classes and correspondence courses have been offered deaf adults from time to time since early in this century.

Results have been spotty. Most programs suffer from lack of funds and lack of permanent, trained professional staff. All programs feel the lack of materials specifically tailored to the needs of the deaf adult. Many are forced to operate under public school regulations in terms of class size that are unrealistic and impractical in terms of the communications problem native to the deaf adult and the size of the deaf community from which students are drawn, and so forth.

The situation requires: first, the modification of existing programs so that they are more conducive to participation by the deaf; second, the creation of new continuing education programs designed specifically for the deaf; and third, the upgrading of the skills and learning levels of deaf adults so that they can profit where possible by participation in existing continuing education programs (Figure 4). In short, an unlimited option education system is required to provide maximum opportunity for the deaf adult to satisfy his education needs in any area at any level.

The goals of this program are to provide every deaf adult with opportunities for continuous learning that will aid him to: 1) reach a level of productivity satisfactory to himself; 2) approach his highest level of educational attainment; 3) change his vocational profession if he so desires; 4) update his professional skill or professional proficiency; 5) broaden his knowledge and appreciation of the arts and humanities and participate in cultural affairs; 6) re-enter a program to enhance further skills or knowledge previously gained; 7) become more learned in social or civic responsibility, and function more effectively in the general society at or near his capacity.

CEPDA is composed of five major components: 1. The Gallaudet College Continuing Education Center, 2. Supporting Agencies, 3. Cooperating Institutions, 4. Affiliated Continuing Education Services, and 5. The Adult Deaf Consumers. These components are related together to form a

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national system of continuing education for deaf adults. The functional relationships of these components in the overall program are shown in Figure 5.

The Field Service Office is an extension unit of the Gallaudet College Continuing Education Center. It is located in a particular geographic area with the responsibility to stimulate local agencies and institutions to provide adult education services for the deaf. These Field Service Offices will be funded by Gallaudet College, but they will develop local resources wherever possible in support of local programs.

Field Service Offices will receive seed monies from the Center to stimulate the appropriate use of local resources for the delivery of affiliated continuing education services.

Determining the size of the group of most likely CEPDA consumers within this community is to use hearing loss as a prime criterion for selection, on the assumption that those least able to hear comprise the group which has the greatest need for continuing education services. Application of this criterion identifies the CEPDA target population as 325,000 deaf adults, 200,000 of whom function at a minimum level of hearing with or without hearing aids, and 125,000 deaf adults who are non-functional with or without a hearing aid. The primary consumer group is the latter group of 125,000, and the second consumer group is the former group of 200,000. Best estimates indicate that little more than one thousand deaf adults are being provided continuing education opportunities at the present time.

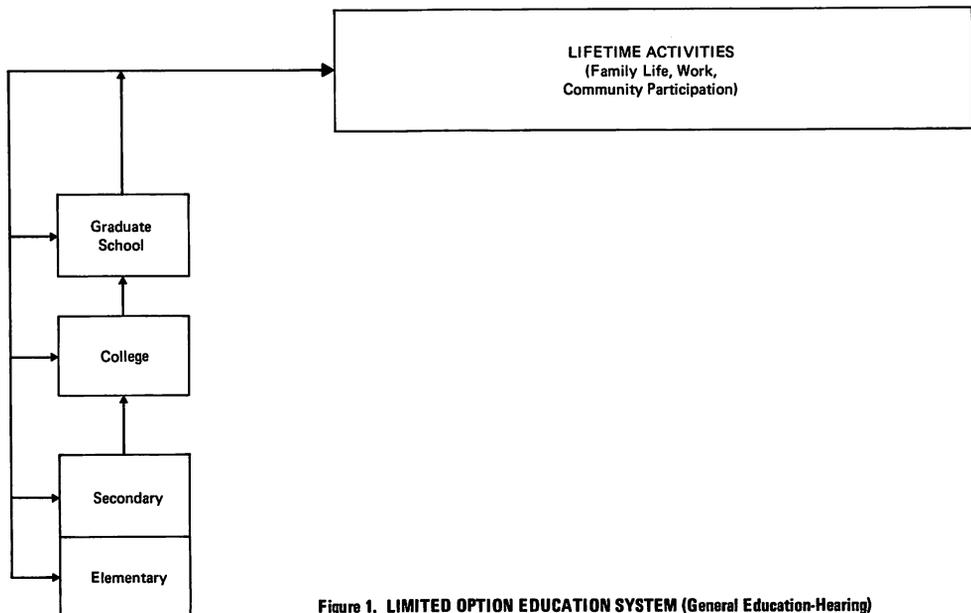


Figure 1. LIMITED OPTION EDUCATION SYSTEM (General Education-Hearing)

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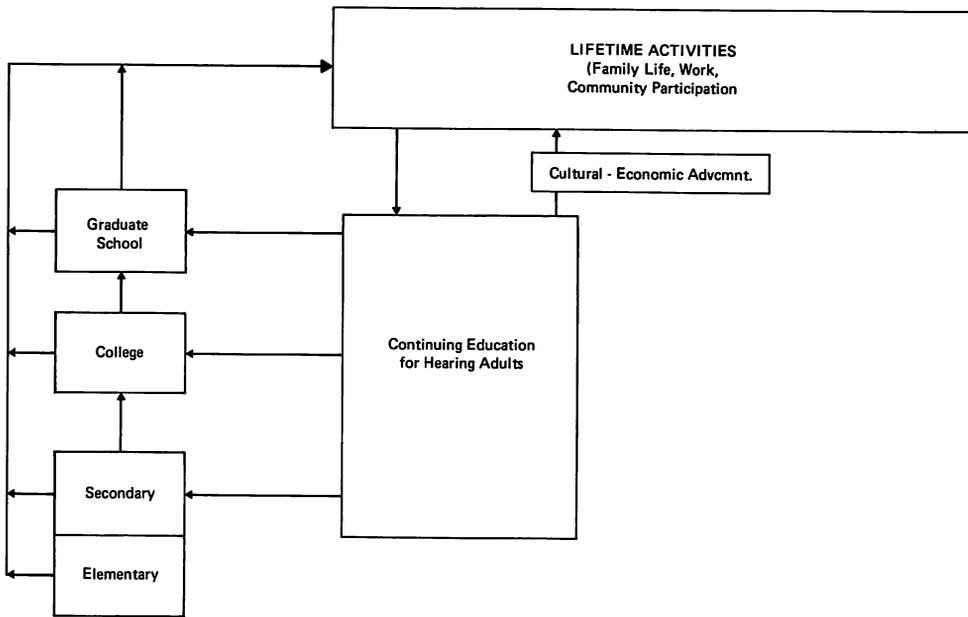


Figure 2. UNLIMITED OPTION EDUCATION SYSTEM (General Education-Hearing)

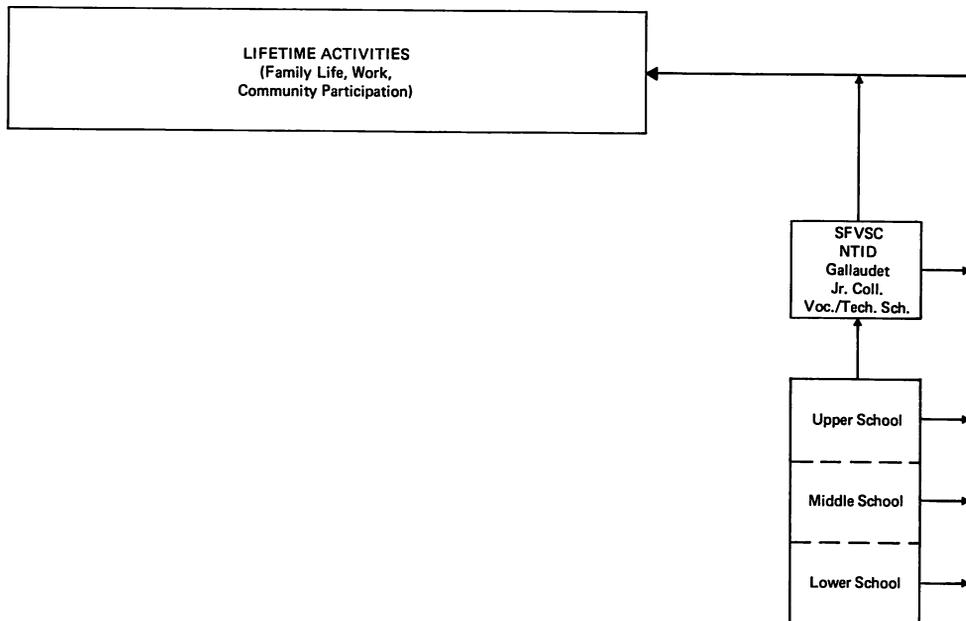


Figure 3. LIMITED OPTION EDUCATION SYSTEM (DEAF)

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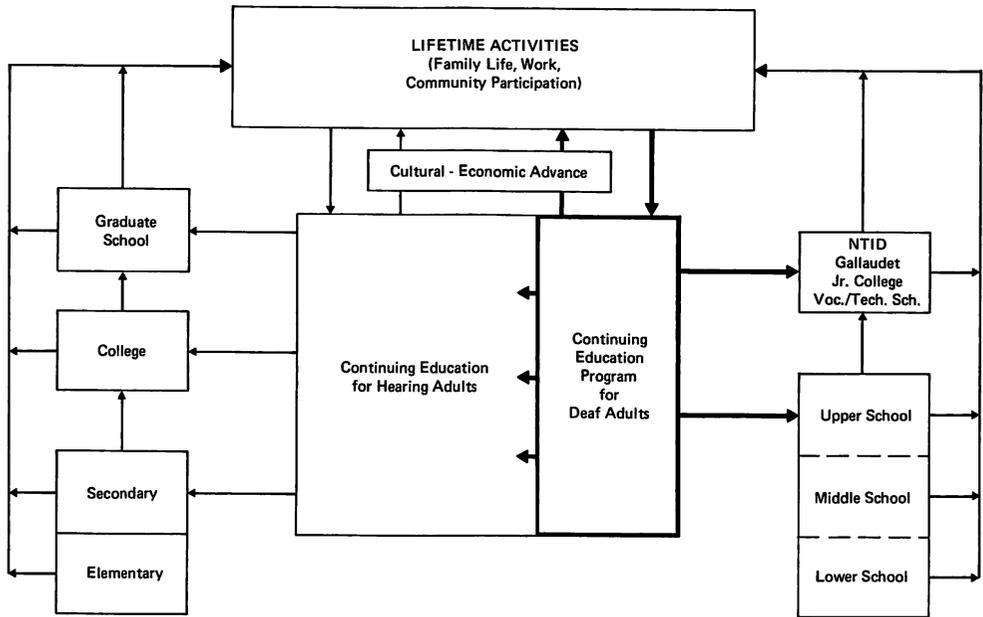


Figure 4. COMPARATIVE UNLIMITED OPTION EDUCATION SYSTEM
(Toward equal opportunities for hearing and deaf)

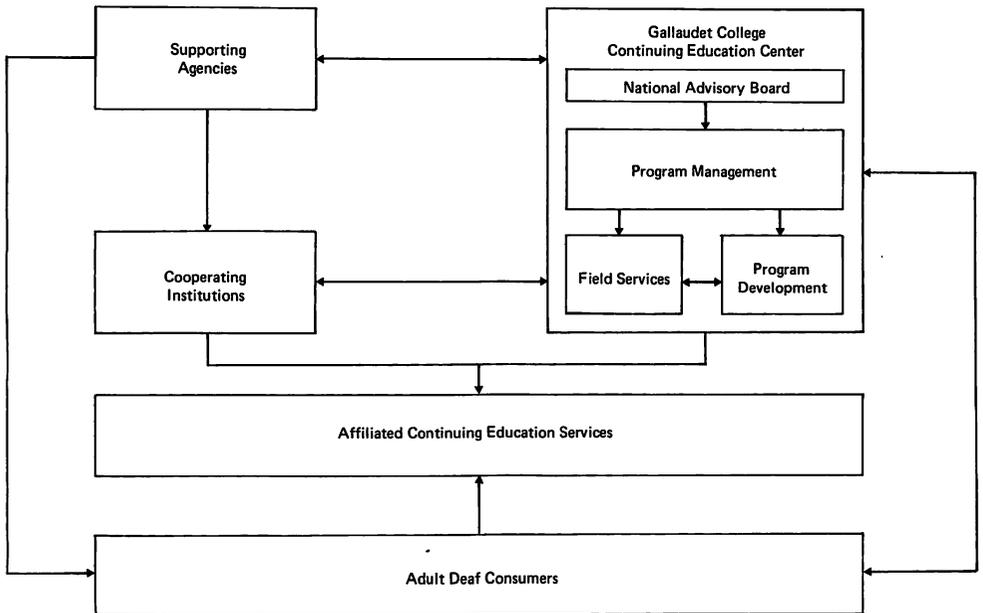


Figure 5. CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR DEAF ADULTS