

**Title:****ASSESSING THE QUALITY AND HEALTHINESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS**

**Author:** Alim Chandani, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Gallaudet University, USA

**Abstract:**

The India Department of Education's *Action Plan of 2020* calls for all higher education institutions to become "disabled friendly," in response to an increase in deaf programs within higher education. Consequently, there is a critical need to assess the quality of education services for Deaf students. This study aimed to provide useful information for improvements in current deaf programs at higher education institutions in India. Administrators, faculty members, and students at three institutions participated in this mixed-method approach study that focused on three major assessments areas: (1) organizational culture; (2) decision-making skills based on the leadership styles of the administrators and faculty members; and (3) attitudes towards people who are deaf. The results were that: (1) Top administrators perceived themselves as *highly task-oriented* and the faculty perceived the top administrators as *highly relationship-oriented*, (2) most of the higher education institutions shared a family-friendly culture, and (3) all three higher education institutions demonstrated positive attitudes toward deaf persons. Based on these results, the higher education institutions are recommended to: 1) secure additional resources; 2) engage in active outreach; and 3) increase the opportunities for ongoing dialogues.

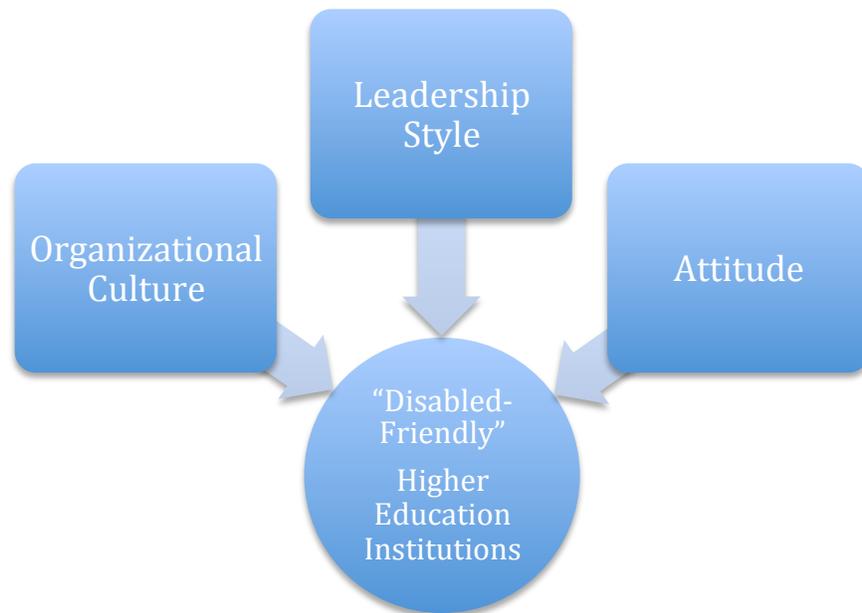
**Introduction**

Although India has more than 3 million deaf people, only 15,000 of them have received an education through special programs. Out of these 15,000, only .05% receive accommodations that meet their academic and employment needs (Vasishta, 2011). Upon enrollment at higher education institutions, only 0.1% of students with disabilities have successfully earned their bachelor's degrees.

Due to this alarming statistic, the National Government of India developed a mandate, *Action Plan for Inclusive Education of Children with Disabilities*, requiring all educational institutions to be "disabled-friendly" by 2020 (UNICEF, 2004). To achieve this momentum, higher education institution administrators and faculty members are to be trained in disability studies, and provide accommodations for students with disabilities. The likelihood is that the administration will focus on how students can assimilate into society rather than having the university be trained in the development of accommodations and specialized curriculum approaches to fit their disabled students' learning needs or identity development.

This study evaluated how effective higher education institutions were in satisfying this national mandate. To explore this, three components were identified in measuring the healthiness and quality of educational services to Deaf students:

- Leadership: Assessing the effectiveness of leadership styles among administrators
- Organizational Culture: Assessing the university's operating culture
- Attitude: Assessing the administration and faculty's perceptions of deaf students in specific areas



*Figure 1:* The framework of this study shows three aspects of disabled-friendly higher education institutions.

## **Background**

India has the third largest higher education system in the world, after China and the United States (Agarwal, 2006). “In today’s global environment, an accessible and high quality higher education system is imperative for a nation’s economic progress” (Verghese, 2007, p. 1). The National Government of India decided to work towards growing the enrollment rate among students regardless of class, caste, religion, gender, economic status, or disability. India saw its first college for deaf students in 1993, when St. Louis College for the Deaf was established in Chennai. Today, several government-funded higher education institutions have programs for deaf students, creating an array of choices for deaf students.

## **Methods**

This study included three assessments: (1) Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) (Cameron & Quinn, 2010), (2) Leadership Effectiveness & Adaptability Description (LEAD) (Hersey & Blanchard, 1974), and, (3) Attitudes Toward Disabled Person Scale (ATDP) (Yuker, 1970). Each instrument was administered to 18 individuals at three selected institutions of higher learning serving deaf students, yielding a total sampling population of 54 subjects.

A qualitative assessment supplemented the quantitative aspects of this study, administered to by a focus group of 10 students from each of the three institutions. Since the deaf participants all used Indian Sign Language (ISL), data collection was more valid through a focus group. A translator translated all of the 10 open-ended questions (drawn from the ATDP instrument) into ISL for the participants.

## **Results**

This study indeed provides baseline comparisons of the organizational cultures, leadership styles, and attitudes of the existing three deaf programs at higher education institutions in India. It also offers a framework for comparing inter-institutional strengths and weaknesses, as perceived by both administrators and/or faculty and students in programs serving students with disabilities. Furthermore, the study results may be helpful not only to programs within India, but also in other developing nations.

### ***Top-Level Leadership***

Results shows that top-level administrators were *highly task-oriented* in achieving the institution's strategic goals. The faculty members perceived their administrators' leadership style as *high relationship-oriented*, where the administrators were primarily conducive in achieving their institutions' mission and vision.

### ***CLAN Culture***

Based on the OCAI instrument results, two of three institutions demonstrated their current organizational cultures as a CLAN environment — meaning, a culture emphasizing strong collaboration and teamwork efforts when there are constant changes to meet expectations for high-quality service in educating deaf students. This was expected, since a CLAN culture typically is a family-friendly environment, reflecting one of the fundamentals of Indian culture: strong family values. In India, it is natural for professionals to bring their family-oriented values to the workplace, where they want to be trusted by their co-workers. It became

clear through the participants that this type of culture contributes to satisfying the mandate of a “disabled-friendly” environment.

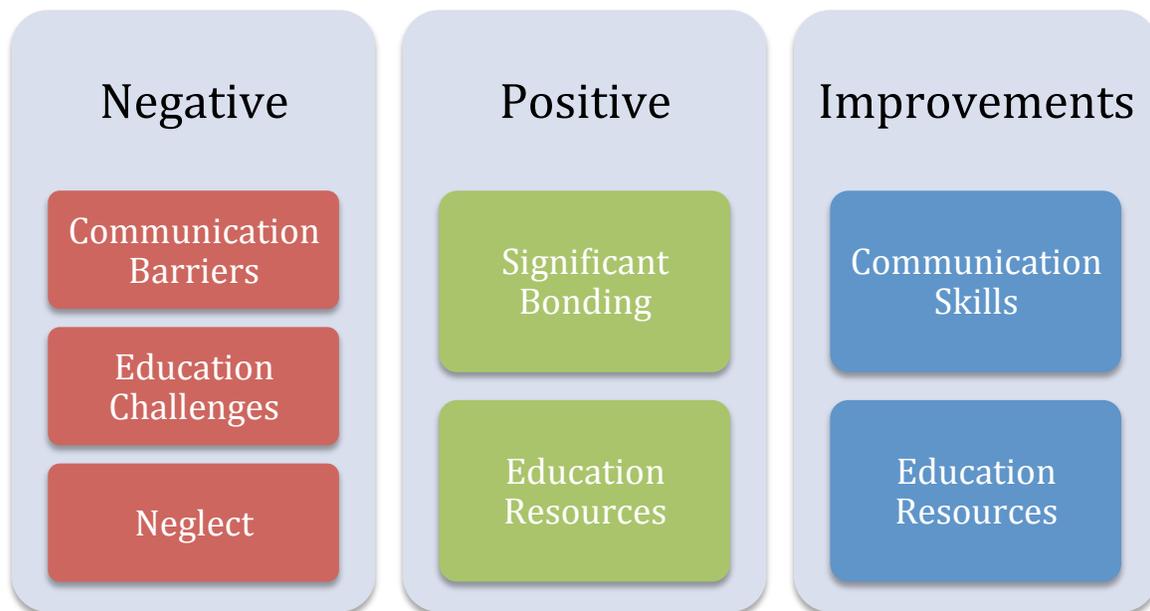
### ***Attitudes Toward Deaf Students***

All three institutions demonstrated a positive attitude toward deaf students by:

- Addressing the challenges that emerged from the students’ needs
- Encouraging the students in self-acceptance
- Promoting high-quality services in education for deaf students.

Furthermore, the demographic survey filled out by the administrators and faculty exhibited that 83% of them interacted with the deaf students at least a few times a week. This indicated a healthy level of awareness of those students’ presence and needs.

The qualitative part of the study also had three focus groups with the deaf students to gather perspectives on various topics, especially attitudes and the *healthiness and quality* standards at their institutions. The responses were then categorized into three themes: negative, positive, and improvements. These three themes were then sub-categorized, as shown in the below diagram.



*Figure 2:* The study participants’ responses were categorized into three major themes: negative, positive and improvements.

### **Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated that higher education programs for Indian deaf students will flourish if the stakeholders, including administration and faculty

members, parents, and community members, all readily recognize and accept that deaf people are no longer considered “untouchables.” They must also recognize that deaf students are to become integral contributors of India society and workforces.

In order to maintain the healthiness and quality of higher education institutions for the Deaf in India, three primary areas of impact were identified in this study:

- How leadership styles among and faculty benefitted the deaf students they served;
- How the healthiness and quality of a higher education institution’s organizational culture can also benefit deaf students; and,
- How awareness of positive and negative attitudes toward deaf students at these institutions can have an appreciable effect on the students, and arguably on others.

This study also may help the institutions in satisfying the *Action Plan 2020*.

Furthermore, each of the three institutions is recommended to:

- Secure additional resources for deaf students
- Promote active outreach to other institutions serving similar populations to cross-fertilize ideas, insights and research; and,
- Increase the opportunities for ongoing dialogue sessions with deaf students as conducted by the administrators and faculty of the institution.

Ultimately, a successful approach to achieving these goals is to place qualified deaf professionals at higher levels within faculty and administration at these higher education institutions.

### **References:**

Agarwal, P. (2006). *Higher education in India: The need for change*.

[http://www.icrier.org/pdf/ICRIER\\_WP180\\_\\_Higher\\_Education\\_in\\_India\\_.pdf](http://www.icrier.org/pdf/ICRIER_WP180__Higher_Education_in_India_.pdf)

Cameron, K., & Quinn, R. (2010). *The organizational culture assessment instrument (OCAI)*. Retrieved from <http://www.ocai-online.com/products>

Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. (1974). So you want to know *your leadership style? Measuring how you behave in a situational leadership framework*. *Training and Development Journal* (p. 22-37).

UNICEF. (2004). *Government of India announces plan to make education disabled-friendly by 2020*. New York, NY.

Vasishta, M. (2011). Social situations and the education of deaf children in India. In G. Mathur, & D. J. Napoli (Eds.), *Deaf Around the World* (p. 353). New York, NY: Oxford Press.

Verghese, A. (2007). *OD interventions for sustainable excellence in higher education*. India: Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode.

Yuker, H. E. (1970). *The measurement of attitudes toward disabled persons*. Albertson, NY: Human Resource Center.