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## THE HONORS PROGRAM

### **The Unheard Needs of the Deaf in Ecuador**

*An Honors Capstone Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation with  
University Honors*

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### Abstract

According to the World Federation of the Deaf, at least 90% of deaf people in developing countries are not receiving any education (Hauland & Allen, 2011). Very little research has been done on deaf education in Ecuador specifically. Although some deaf children in Ecuador are receiving an education, their education is impeded by insufficient communication access, lack of government awareness about best practices, and a shortage of teachers with deaf-specific work experience and training. This project provides an analysis of Ecuador's disabled citizens in general and deaf and hard-of-hearing people in particular, as a context for a focus on education of deaf and hard of hearing students. This focus results in creation of tools to conduct an educational needs assessment at the National Institute for Hearing and Language located in Quito, Ecuador. Needs assessments prioritize issues and propose resolutions to such issues; this one concentrates on services and access as well as the level of instruction for the curriculum at the National Institute for Hearing and Language. With the help of an educational needs assessment, the institution should be able to prepare their students to obtain a higher education or otherwise to improve their opportunities to create more productive and fulfilling lives for themselves and their nation.

*“El problema no está en el oído, el problema está en la mente del oyente.”*

*“The problem is not in the ear, it is in the mind of the listener.”*

- Deaf student at the National Institute for Hearing & Language (El Comercio, 2011)

Quito, Ecuador

### **Introduction**

According to the World Federation of the Deaf, at least 90% of deaf people in developing countries are not receiving any education (Hauland & Allen, 2011). The label “deaf” includes all citizens that have any type of hearing loss and may or may not use amplification devices such as hearing aids or cochlear implants. Ecuador is one of the countries in Latin America that is slowly adding services and trying to better their system for deaf students by holding workshops and seminars to inform schools on new data highlighting important topics such as a better teaching method or training teachers on how to work with deaf children (Van Cleve, 1987). However, oppression has been the pervasive reality for many deaf citizens of Ecuador. The education of deaf Ecuadorians is impaired by a lack of communication access, a dearth of government awareness about the issue, and a shortage of teachers with deaf-specific work experience and training. To address these problems, educators and administrators of Ecuadorian deaf schools need tools to evaluate their school against those that are more successful in educating deaf children. A needs assessment tool, the end-goal of the current project, would allow such an evaluation. Furthermore, this evaluation could set Ecuador on a course to be leader in Latin America, indeed among developing countries worldwide.

*This project, developing a needs assessment of Ecuadorian education of deaf children consists of two parts. First I participated in an internship involving the development and implementation of needs assessments for deaf people in general, followed by the creation of all materials for a proposed educational assessment system adjusted for linguistic and cultural norms appropriate for use at the National Institute of Hearing and Language, the deaf school situated in Quito, Ecuador, with the goal of implementing the actual assessment during my graduate studies.* The internship took place at Deaf Focus in Baton Rouge, Louisiana during the summer of 2012. During this internship, I created and conducted a needs assessment on communication access for Deaf consumers throughout the state in regard to mental health and vocational services.

A needs assessment is a process by which a professional conducts surveys, interviews, or observations in order to identify any gaps or needed improvements in a given institution (Rouda & Kussy, n.d.). My internship experience at Deaf Focus in Louisiana improved my understanding and knowledge of how to conduct a needs assessment. With that experience, I adapted the assessment appropriately to an educational assessment that suits the National Institute for Hearing and Language's demands and needs. Although the needs assessment at my internship was related to mental health, the process of creating and implementing a needs assessment turns out to be somewhat standard regardless of the items that are reviewed.

### *Ecuador: Demographics and Disability Awareness*

Ecuador is a small country in South America with a population of about 14,464,739 people (Gonzales, 2012). It is located on the Pacific Coast of South America at the equator and is nestled between the countries of Peru and Bolivia (World Factbook, 2013). The official language

of the country is Spanish, although other languages are spoken, such as Quechua, the language of the indigenous people. Shuar and other less common indigenous languages are also used for communication. Most of its citizens are Mestizo (mixed Amerindian and Spanish) or indigenous, comprising about 86% of the population (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Compulsory education is mandated for children ages 5-18, with a 77% attendance rate among the country's students. The poverty rate is about 33% percent after recovery from a recent economic crisis (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Although Ecuador ratified the International Convention on the Rights of Disabled People in March 2008, not many social or legislative changes have been made (DHEx2, 2009). All Ecuadorian adults are required to work. Ecuadorian law requires that companies must hire people with disabilities and prohibits discrimination in hiring, advancement, and the workplace in general. Regardless of the fact that deaf adults must work, they rarely enter high positions or advance in their job placements partly because they lack the appropriate level of education and communication access (Joshua Project, 2011; Eberle, Eberle, Parks, & Parks, 2012). Often, however, discriminatory attitudes exacerbate issues of undereducation: Deaf citizens of Ecuador are treated unfairly because of discriminatory attitudes and even called offensive names (Erting et al., 1994). One bright spot in recent history is the election of vice president of Ecuador, Lenín Moreno, a paraplegic. Many in the deaf community as well as in the larger disabled community are hoping for the re-election of the incumbent Moreno since he has proved to be a strong advocate of disability rights, sparking increased awareness of issues related to disability rights and encouraging greater respect for the disabled.

One of the biggest victories for the disabled in Ecuador was Moreno's creation of the Ecuador Sin Barreras project (the Ecuador Without Barriers project). The purpose of the

organization is to foster greater inclusion of disabled people in society and more sensitivity to their needs at work and in their everyday lives. As a result of the project's findings about the harsh reality that disabled citizens in Ecuador face, in 2008 President Rafael Correa issued an executive order citing a state of emergency for individuals with disabilities and demanded immediate action to improve accessibility and assistance to the population (Gobierno Nacional de la Republica del Ecuador, n.d.). To accomplish this goal, President Correa "increased the budget for disabled care from about \$100,000 a year to \$65 million per year, [and] has required businesses to reserve one out of every 25 jobs for people with disabilities" (Wyss, 2011). Vice president Moreno has been so instrumental in raising awareness and bettering the circumstances surrounding the disabled population in Ecuador that he received a nomination for the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize (Eberle, 2012).

Although Vice-President Moreno's work has raised awareness of the need to improve the lives of disabled people in Ecuador, very little research has been done on deaf education needs in Ecuador. So far, only seven academic sources in the United States with any research or a brief mention of the topic of deaf education in Ecuador exists (Erting, Johnson, Smith, & Snider, 1994; Torres, 2005; Van Cleve, 1987; Claros, 2000; Delgado, 1995; Stephens et. al, 2000; Eberle, 2012). Without a significant amount of research available in America, a reliable understanding of the current education practices for deaf children is challenging. Certainly the literature reveals that no one has done a needs assessment project for Ecuador's deaf schools.

Fortunately many needs assessments have been conducted in the United States and in other countries. They have provided an abundance of examples on the process of preparing and completing a needs assessment that have served to guide me in the creation and adaptation of an educational needs assessment for Ecuadorian deaf education (Communication access and quality

education for deaf and hard-of-hearing children, 1999; York & Atherton, 1989; Christina School District, n.d.). As the most immediate example to adapt that I know best, my analysis of communication access throughout the state of Louisiana in regard to mental health and vocational services has served as the basis for my tool for a needs assessment of the education of deaf children in Ecuador. In particular, I have adapted my work in Louisiana to investigate a residential school for the deaf in Quito. By creating this needs assessment tool for Ecuador, I will prepare the path for a graduate school project where I can go to Quito and use this tool to conduct the actual assessment myself.

### *Motivation for the Project*

My family is from Ecuador, and I have visited there quite often. Over the years I became acutely aware of the advantages I had as a deaf person receiving an education in the United States. My family has stressed giving back to our country of origin; perhaps the most notable contribution is my obstetrician father's introduction of sonograms to Ecuador. Because of my experiences and interests, education has become my area of focus. The National Institute for Hearing and Language in Quito, Ecuador is an important focus to me because I met many of the students and some deaf teachers there when I visited in the summer of 2011. The school is also of special importance because it is the largest deaf school that provides both elementary and secondary education in the country, and serves as a model for many other deaf schools in the nation (The Joshua Project, 2011). It is my hope that once the educational foundation in Ecuador improves for deaf people, they may be more widely accepted into the mainstream community and lead more satisfying lives.



While I was on my visit at the national school in Quito, several students expressed to me that they desired to go to college like I do, but accessibility in Ecuador is not as commonplace as it is here in the United States (El Comercio, 2011). The children also informed me they thought it was incredible that I was able to communicate in American Sign Language with my teachers in the United States and have a chance at accomplishing my dreams for a professional life.

Because there is no system for documenting the needs of deaf education at the National Institute for Hearing and Language, opportunities for systematic improvement in students' education remain remote. The needs assessment will be a valuable contribution to the institution if they aspire to improve the academic achievement of their students and thereby give them a better chance of making it into higher education and entering their dream careers.

## **DEAF EDUCATION IN ECUADOR**

### *Background: The Context of Overall Education in Ecuador*

Despite the current state of Ecuador's deaf education, Ecuadorians highly value education. Since the 1980s, the government has demonstrated recognition and support for this strong value; government officials have focused intensely on improvement of pedagogy, access to schools, and curriculum standards. Many schools in Ecuador primarily teach in Spanish, but, to prepare for participation in an increasingly global context, there are also numerous bilingual schools and institutions that teach an assorted range of other languages (Education in Ecuador, n.d.).

Both public and private schools exist. Free public schools have been constructed since the 1980s, and private schools have been popular for years before that and since, mostly in urban areas. Students of a lower socioeconomic status typically attend public school, while those of a

higher socioeconomic status commonly enroll in private schools. However, a substantial amount of teachers are not accredited, especially in public schools. The lack of certified teachers is especially evident in rural areas, where teachers are twice as likely to have no accreditation (Ecuador-Education, n.d.). Even with the struggle to find certified teachers, since the rise of the public school in the 1980s and the greater emphasis on education by the government, literacy in Ecuador has skyrocketed (Ecuador-Education, n.d.; Education in Ecuador, n.d.; Torres, 2005).

These increases in schools and literacy have not shown up among deaf children although deaf people comprise a significant part of the overall population. Overall, 20% of the people of Ecuador have some sort of hearing loss. That accounts for about 2,892,948 people who are deaf or hard of hearing out of a total of 14,464,739 citizens. About 216,000 of those people are profoundly deaf (DHEx2, 2009; Gonzales, 2012; The Joshua Project, 2011; Eberle, 2012). Ecuador has a higher percentage of people with hearing loss relative to the United States—approximately 16% of the US population has hearing loss—which is an estimated 36 million who are deaf or hard of hearing (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, 2010), compared to 20% for Ecuador.

Despite this relatively high number of deaf Ecuadorians, the author's extensive search has found limited data on deaf education in Ecuador. Available data indicates that an extremely small number of deaf children are presently attending school. Only about 450 out of 13,000 deaf children were documented as attending school in the 1980s, although these statistics probably do not include all deaf children (Van Cleve, 1987). Some children may not have been recorded for various reasons, and the number of deaf children *not* receiving an education is likely higher.

Most deaf students in the country who are attending school go to a deaf-only school or a school for students with disabilities. There are about twenty schools or programs that include

children who are deaf in Ecuador. Seven of them are dedicated solely to educating children who are deaf or hard of hearing, while the rest of the schools or programs are geared toward all special needs children, including those who are intellectually disabled, blind, or learning disabled (Van Cleve, 1987). Those that attend a deaf school typically are taught using the Total Communication method of teaching, with relatively few deaf schools using the bilingual-bicultural approach (The Joshua Project, 2011; Eberle, 2012).

The literature includes some mention of additional academic support services available to deaf students in Ecuador, although the literature lacks desired details. The Encyclopedia of Deafness discusses academic services available to deaf children in 9 out of 20 schools, but does not specify what those are (Van Cleve, 1987). In the United States, academic services could refer to tutors, interpreters, separate classrooms, an FM system, and so forth. Data for Ecuador does not make clear what kind of supports deaf children are receiving in the classroom.

Despite improvements in literacy and school construction overall, higher levels of education remain limited for both hearing and deaf Ecuadorians so that illiteracy remains too high. Less than half of the hearing population finishes secondary schooling, and this problem is even worse for deaf children (Torres, 2005; Van Cleve, 1987). Since so few people have completed their education, illiteracy in Ecuador has become a troubling issue specifically for those with any kind of special needs or disability (Torres, 2005). Overall, the deaf population in Ecuador has been very receptive toward the idea that literacy in the deaf community must be improved (The Joshua Project, 2011). This interest makes the development and eventual implementation of a needs assessment well timed.

### *Deficiencies in Deaf Education*

Aware of the lack of adequate, accessible education worldwide, the World Federation of the Deaf advocates for education as a basic right for all deaf children. Indeed, as with all children, deaf children deserve appropriate access to a high quality academic experience. How we understand accessibility determines how teachers are trained. Based on numerous empirical studies, Marschark and Hauser (2012) claim that when teachers of the deaf use the same language mode as the child, they will learn more. This mode must be visual; the visual mode of sign language in particular creates effective access. However, many hearing teachers of the deaf at the National Institute for Hearing and Language do not sign or they cannot sign fluently. This shortage is a major barrier to education. Despite the fact the right to learn in one's own language has been established in the National Constitution of Ecuador, it is rarely addressed (Torres, 2005). Furthermore, because so few teachers at the National Institute for Hearing and Language are deaf, the students sadly do not have a substantial number of deaf role models. Considering how these children look to such role models for an example of what they can become in the future (Marschark & Hauser, 2012), this lack has a detrimental impact on preparation for productive adult life.

A distinction between teachers of the deaf and general education teachers has been noted in the United States as well; teachers of the deaf tend to have more experience and instruction in dealing with deaf and hard of hearing students and thus can manage different needs that are unique to deaf students alone more easily. Without experienced and knowledgeable teachers of the deaf, students may not have access to the visual environment they need (Marschark & Hauser, 2012). In Ecuador, there is no licensing or certification process for professionals working with deaf people (Erting et. al, 1994). This dearth of professional oversight is a problem because teachers often perform much better when they have completed a teacher of the deaf

preparation program or attend workshops throughout the year, according to United States based research (Dodd & Scheetz, 2003).

Workshops are available to professionals working with the deaf in Ecuador, but they are not required and their effectiveness has not been analyzed (Erting et. al, 1994). Most feel that they are overwhelmed with information; without adequate processing, they do not come away feeling well prepared.

Inadequate training is not the only problem; curriculum is also insufficient: Deaf schools and programs do not always follow a typical academic curriculum; instead the schools will only use a basic primary program with more concentration on perceived needs for deaf students, such as speaking skills. Ecuador also lacks preschools or infant-care programs for deaf youth. As a result of the poor deaf education system, there is no record of anyone with a severe loss going on to attend a university (Van Cleve, 1987). With these issues, a needs assessment is necessary to help arrange priorities for school improvement and better preparation for productive lives.

Even though so far no one has done a needs assessment of the deaf schools in Ecuador specifically, there is general support for improvement of deaf education in several Latin American countries (R. Sanchez, personal communication, April 27, 2012). Colombia is one example. Most of the nation's support for improving deaf education comes from the National Federation of the Deaf in Colombia. Several goals are cited by this organization, such as creating bilingual schools using Spanish and sign language for deaf children in elementary school and recruiting interpreters for deaf students in secondary school and higher education (Federación Nacional de Sordos de Colombia, n.d.). Ecuador has taken cues from Colombia's organization; their own Federation of the Deaf now aims to begin the process of researching deaf education by

first beginning with the standardization of Ecuadorian Sign Language (Federación Nacional de Sordos del Ecuador, n.d.; El Insor recibio visita de la Vicepresidencia del Ecuador, 2011).

Costa Rica is another example. The Costa Rican Department of Education has compiled a document citing what the functions and features of teachers of the deaf are, how deaf children in public education can receive services, and what features comprise success for a deaf student that in the public school versus a deaf school (El Centro Nacional de Recursos para la Educacion Inclusiva, 2011).

As these examples illustrate, most of the goals for improvement throughout Latin America have yet to become specific enough to be put into action and little implementation has taken place (R. Sanchez, personal communication, April 27, 2012). It is my hope that Ecuador can lead the way; my needs assessment is intended to take the next step in specifying actions for implementation.

## **NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

### *Definition*

A needs assessment is a systematic way of determining what items need to be added or fixed in a given system. However, a needs assessment is about more than identifying problems. Needs assessments also prioritize the problems and propose resolutions. As Watkins et al. (2012) explain, “The needs assessment offers a careful process for assessing gaps between current results and desired results...and then for applying that information to identify the available options so that decisions can be made.” Essentially needs assessments can be a helpful tool for determining how to make a decision and what must be implemented.

Depth of understanding is provided in determining how factors that are lacking can detract from maximal performance and what specific tactics can help reconcile a deficiency in

order to achieve superior performance. Rather than a simple problem/solution strategy for decision-making, needs assessments attempt to provide a more organized presentation of the criteria that are ordered according to significance and dealt with accordingly (Watkins et al, 2012). Resources that are already in place in a given system are recognized and used appropriately so that issues that are in need of aid can be assisted (Timin, n.d.).

### *Purpose of the Educational Needs Assessment*

Since there is no data on how the Ecuadorian deaf students are achieving compared to their hearing peers, I would like focus on the education they are receiving as compared to what children in the general population receive. Broadly, my surveys measure: communication access, school-provided services, curriculum and instruction, professional development, family and community involvement, and school organization (Planning a schoolwide program change, 1998)

While there are many issues to be addressed, they are underneath the larger concept of accessibility that needs more research. Accessibility should be everywhere, so that students with different needs and communication methods should benefit equally in relation to their hearing peers. Accessibility includes ease of communication with others, availability of services such as sign language interpreters or cued speech transliterators, availability of instructional materials in the deaf child's preferred language or method of communication, and much more. Although I have emphasized the use of sign language, the situation is complex: As more and more children in Ecuador receive cochlear implants and hearing aids, their needs must be accommodated as well (Ecuador; Knifton, 2009).

To begin the process of improvement in access, it is first necessary to make sure that those in control of the school have appropriate training, resources, and support (Adelman & Taylor, 2007). Teachers should be using up-to-date methods and the curriculum should incorporate new information from research as well. Teachers should also have the opportunity for professional development and the ability to acquire more knowledge to use their time in the classroom more efficiently. They should be in general agreement with each other on how to work with the children and be sure the curriculum is standardized.

Schools do not just have teachers who have adequate training and accessible communication for the children, but also a community involved in the students' development. Thus, my surveys include questions designated to learn about parental involvement and the community working with the school. For example, I have included several questions in my teacher and staff survey to find out if parents are able to take courses to learn Ecuadorian Sign Language, if they can easily access services within the school for their child, and so on. With parental support and encouragement, children may have a more effective learning environment at home and thus have an opportunity to learn to the fullest capacity at school (Marschark and Hauser, 2012).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Needs Survey: Components*

An educational needs assessment is a process wherein researchers identify the needs of students, the strengths of the school, and recommendations for improvements. In order to complete the needs assessment and provide possible strategies for enhancement, researchers first must gather information from the educational community, including the teachers, staff, and



parents (Watkins et. al, 2012). This information collection is typically completed through a survey of available resources and then related to the needs to be examined (Timin, n.d.).

### *Needs Survey Training in Louisiana*

To train and prepare for the creation of my Ecuadorian needs assessment, I worked with Paula Rodriguez, MSW, LCSW, CSSW-S, and CT to create surveys for a needs assessment of mental health services and communication accessibility in the state of Louisiana. Volunteers working with Ms. Rodriguez as part of her team served on a committee, which was comprised of several employees and volunteers from Deaf Focus, workers from Deaf Action Centers, interpreters, parents of deaf children, and deaf citizens of Louisiana. By working with Ms. Rodriguez and her team, I developed the skills I needed to devise and adapt needs assessment materials for Ecuador. These skills include identifying populations for audiences, constructing needs assessment materials for unique environments, analyzing the data collected in field-acceptable ways, and reporting the results and recommendations in a professional manner consistent with the expectations of the field.

The first step I took focused on information collection. I developed a survey using Survey Monkey, a website for creating survey instruments, that included brief demographic information and questions about communication access needs specifically related to mental health services throughout the state of Louisiana. It included topics such as interpreting services in various settings, adherence to the Americans with Disabilities Act, and general treatment by professionals. The overall purpose of the surveys was to learn about the experiences of deaf residents of Louisiana who have utilized mental health services and determine if their needs in regard to communication access were met. The survey were circulated through a link that can be

shared via social media, through newsletters, and through agencies across the state, as well as posted in areas frequented by deaf citizens, like Deaf Action Centers.

Ms. Rodriguez and I, along with the team conducted several regional meetings together throughout the state to assist participants during the distribution of the survey, answer questions regarding the survey, and spread awareness about the purpose of the survey.

After we collected the survey data, I utilized Survey Monkey to analyze the data gathered during the needs assessment. After the analysis of the survey data was completed, I summarized and presented my findings to Ms. Rodriguez, who will also be conducting her own analysis using the data set I constructed. Once our analyses were completed, Ms. Rodriguez and I worked together to determine what areas are lacking and which were functioning well according to the results received from the survey.

Once the problem areas were identified, Ms. Rodriguez and I explored causes and solutions. To do so, I created a needs assessment citing what elements were lacking so we could discuss them with those who are involved in the problem areas and construct possible solutions. Factors were prioritized according to what services and solutions are needed immediately, such as interpreter access in hospitals. We worked to develop solutions to facilitate improvement both over the long term and the short term.

In sum, this experience provided me with the understanding, knowledge, and practice for application to my surveys for Ecuador. The surveys I created for Ms. Rodriguez and her committees have served as an example for me to learn from.

*Adaptation of Needs Assessment for Ecuador*

After the completion of the needs assessment in Louisiana, I had the core foundation for Ecuador's educational needs assessment. In order to find an appropriate template to adapt, I attempted to find an example of Louisiana's educational needs assessment, but the only sources I found were restricted to government employees. Although I could not find any educational needs assessments from Louisiana, I was able to access several needs assessments from school districts in other areas, including Delaware, California, and Egypt (Communication access and quality education for deaf and hard-of-hearing children, 1999; York & Atherton, 1989; Christina School District, n.d.). These needs assessments helped me formulate questions, but for formatting, I used Alex Timin's Needs Assessment Questionnaire (n.d.).

Ecuador has fewer resources available and completely different legal standards for deaf education (Van Cleve, 1987). Thus, I had to alter many of the questions on the surveys such as those that include laws that apply only to the United States or Louisiana or those that refer to services that may not exist in Ecuador, like an Individualized Educational Program (IEP). In these ways, I adapted the necessary components of these surveys to collect information and components of the educational needs assessment to suit the National Institute of Hearing and Language of Quito, Ecuador.

Surveys are necessary to document what is currently available as well as what is needed in Ecuador based on indications of weak areas and areas needing more investigation. The survey is mostly comprised of descriptive information. This project will not utilize the same demographic information for the survey as I did for Louisiana because Deaf Focus used a different target population and sought dissimilar answers from their participants. Instead, this project asks about the position at the National Institute for Hearing and Language as part of the demographic information—student, teacher, faculty, etc. I also ask about the participants' ages,

educational attainment, the school's general academic services, communication access in teaching, staff/teachers' knowledge of Deaf culture, strategies of classroom management and assessment, and curriculum relation across the school (McCawley, 2009; Communication access and quality education for deaf and hard-of-hearing children, 1999; York & Atherton, 1989; Christina School District, n.d.).

In addition to demographic information, I have used a self-report instrument to gather information about the backgrounds of the teachers and staff. This self-report instrument will include questions about cultural sensitivity, skills in Ecuadorian Sign Language, and specialized services like counseling, audiological services, or speech therapy. For example, teachers will be questioned about whether they are well versed in the local culture of the deaf community (to be sure that they can understand the perspectives of the students that grow up within the culture) or have fluency in sign language. For all of these jobs working with deaf children, I ask if each individual has had educational or professional training in working with deaf students, and if so, what was it? The surveys are designed for distribution through multiple channels, including the Internet, postal mail, and by hand at the school. Multiple channels complicate the coding process, but are necessary to ensure that sufficient numbers of people are sampled and all members of the target population have an equal chance of participating. To ensure that no individual takes the survey more than once, I would suggest to the distributor to give one login code for each individual, and take note of the individual's initials next to the login code.

In summary, the biggest changes in the adaptation of the mental health assessment from Louisiana were the content of the survey instruments, based on the educational assessments I collected from other states and Egypt, and some formatting from Alex Timin. However, the basic process of creation has been the same and the surveys look similar to the Louisiana instruments.

Both utilized Survey Monkey and a five-point Likert scale for most of the questions. Once I completed the list of questions in English, I translated them into Spanish with the assistance of native Ecuadorians who knew the dialect, mainly family members. I also asked my second reader, Dr. Robert Sanchez of Gallaudet University, to review my translations and ensure that they were appropriate and clear. I faced no real obstacles in the translation of the instrument.

### **POSSIBLE BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION**

#### *Political Resistance*

Ecuador has made progress in improving life for disabled citizens in the country, although it has been painstakingly slow progress for some citizens. After speaking with some natives of Quito who work for the government, I learned that many of them believe that corruption within the government is a large factor in hindering improvements for those with disabilities. Some of them believed that higher positions in deaf schools and mixed-disability schools were claimed by those who were “friends of the government officials” rather than by workers who were highly qualified and motivated to improve the education of the deaf (Anonymous government workers, personal communication, July 2011). One worker expressed the idea that higher positions in deaf schools ought to be filled by deaf individuals, but felt that it would never happen because of government influence. If these ideas are true, then the government should support the placement of individuals who are trained in deaf education and who are motivated to improve the lives of deaf students in higher positions, rather than simply filling a job position with a colleague.

#### *Taking Action*

Politicians always have a constant stream of feedback from their constituents and a never-ending agenda of programs and ideas to research or implement. For Ecuador, it has been a slow journey to raising awareness about disabilities, but at least the journey is taking place and it has a clear spot on the agenda, thanks to President Correa and Vice President Moreno.

### *Use in Future Research*

Now that the adaptation is completed, the National Institute for Hearing and Language could use my assessment to gather information and carry out any necessary improvements if they choose, or I can utilize it during my graduate studies as part of an internship. If I or anyone else decides to conduct the assessment, approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) will be necessary to ensure that the surveys will be conducted ethically and properly. The IRB may find issues with the assessment process that will have to be addressed and appropriately modified to suit their requirements. For example, my surveys are intended for employees of the National Institute of Hearing and Language. One could argue that employees may feel pressured to take the surveys in order to appear supportive of the school or gain favor with their employer. The IRB would determine whether or not the implementation plan provided by the researcher allows for participants to feel comfortable about the project and not coerced to take the surveys. Other deaf schools in the country may also choose to use the surveys, not just the National Institute for Hearing and Language. Schools in other countries can also utilize my surveys by modifying the content to include their own cultural and linguistic needs. The process of disseminating the surveys and conducting the assessment could be exactly the same as listed in the implementation plan I have provided or slightly modified according to the needs of each school.

### **Conclusion**

Ecuador is in serious need of guidance in the deaf educational sector. Without some kind of needs assessment, the National Institute of Hearing and Language cannot know what it is that they are lacking and must improve. With the help of an educational needs assessment, the institution will be able to provide a better future for the deaf children that are currently trudging through the school system, and perhaps turn them into adults who want to obtain a higher education and have a chance at creating a new life.

The literature shows that no project like mine has been done before for Ecuador; thus Quito would gain from having the option to conduct an educational needs assessment if they chose to utilize my adaptation. The situation of the deaf students should not worsen or even be maintained as it is—not enough deaf children are attending school at present when compared to the general population of deaf school-age students in Ecuador, and that is a grave problem in itself. Those that do go to school do not always receive the best education possible. Although my project has been challenging without much research to help lead the way, I have done my best to create a thorough needs assessment for the use of the educators that can change the future of the National Institute of Hearing and Language, and maybe even other deaf schools in the country.

### **Implementation Plan**

In Deaf culture, Deaf schools are highly valued and seen as places to continue passing on Deaf customs and educate children in their natural language, American Sign Language (ASL). They also serve to provide education to a country's population that does not have access to education otherwise. However, the Deaf community is also aware that many Deaf schools do not always provide a quality education. This idea is especially true in other countries, such as Ecuador. The country's economy is not as prosperous as the United States, and most of their educational efforts are aimed at public and private schools not accessible to deaf children. The United States does provide a great deal more accessibility to deaf children and sometimes a solid education, though there is plenty of room for improvement.

My project involves the creation of all materials for an educational assessment system adjusted for linguistic and cultural norms appropriate for use at the National Institute of Hearing and Language, the deaf school situated in Quito, Ecuador, with the goal of implementing my project during my graduate studies. This assessment measures communication access, school-provided services, curriculum and instruction, professional development, family and community involvement, and school organization. My educational needs assessment consists of two surveys. One survey targets teachers only, and the other survey targets all staff in general.

I intend to make my needs assessment available to the Deaf school in Quito (INAL) should they decide they would like the assessment done. I intend to conduct this assessment during graduate school.

### **Tools Used**

I will utilize surveymonkey.com to distribute the surveys and then print them for the National Institute of Hearing and Language (INAL). The website has features that allow for data



analysis and data collection, so I will input the survey questions into this website. It is possible to manually input the answers or simply enter in answers online, so data is recorded automatically and efficiently. Some of Survey Monkey's features allow for display of the most frequently selected answers and what answers were skipped, and it also makes it easy to manipulate the data to form a chart or table.

### **Target Population**

INAL has 36 staff members, comprised of teachers and other faculty members with various degrees and specialties, since Ecuador currently does not offer any training related to education of the deaf.

### **Suggested Strategy for Implementation**

I have contacted the vice principal of INAL, Rocio Cabezas, and she is willing to assist me by answering any questions I have in regards to the survey inquiries. If I would like to conduct the assessment in the future using my surveys, she has said to please feel free to contact her and we can discuss it.

I will set up a meeting date and time at the school for both survey distribution purposes and also for explaining the premise of the survey. My goal for the meeting will be to be sure that the participants understand I am coming from a friendly background and all information will be kept confidential. From my experience in Louisiana, I have found that some participants were concerned about losing their jobs if they were found complaining about accessibility—I want to make sure my participants are comfortable. At the end of my presentation, I will allow for questions from the participants. Once the presentation was over, I will pass out printed copies of the surveys for those who wish to stay and fill it out right then. I will request a Spanish to Ecuadorian Sign Language (LSE) interpreter to interpret the surveys for those Deaf staff workers

that prefer LSE. Otherwise, I will pass out or post up a link to the surveys online for those who would rather take it at a later time on the computer. At that meeting, I will also establish a deadline and give the workers my contact information should they have any other questions or concerns. For those who cannot come to the meeting, I will send out the information covered at the meeting in an emailed letter.

Before the meeting, I will notify all 36 teachers and staff of the surveys, by electronic mail and perhaps a postcard placed in their mailbox at the school.

Throughout collection of data, I will manually insert the data onto Survey Monkey if necessary, and review that all online submissions were properly received. Once the deadline arrived, I will review each submission and summarize my results. After summarizing my responses, I will gather a committee of professionals who have experience with deaf education and come up with recommendations for improvement based on the strengths and weaknesses discovered by the assessment.

**NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

**For Teachers (Timin, n.d.; World Federation, 2010; York and Atherton, 1989)**

Thank you for participating in this survey. We are conducting this survey as part of a needs assessment in an effort to see what components of Instituto Nacional de Audición y Lenguaje (INAL) are effective for appropriately educating deaf students, and what needs improvement. This survey is for teachers only, and aims to assess your understanding of the local Deaf culture, communication access in teaching, curriculum relation across the school, and strategies of classroom management. There is also one other survey for both teachers and staff you may complete. Once all data is collected, you will be informed of the results and may participate in a forum for helping the school become more successful. Thank you for taking a part in improving the school—we value your input.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, you may contact the researcher:

Natalie Delgado

800 Florida Ave. NE #1159

Washington, D.C. 20002

Natalie.delgado@gallaudet.edu

**Individual survey: Teacher**

1. Are you deaf, hard-of-hearing, or hearing?
2. How old are you? (*Ranges for age will be provided in Survey Monkey, i.e. 25-35, 35-45*)
3. How long have you been teaching in general? How long have you taught deaf children?
4. What is your highest educational degree? What degrees or certifications do you have, if any?
5. Are you fluent in Ecuadorian Sign Language (LSE)? If not, how well do you rate your communication skills in LSE—basic signs only or conversational level?

6. Are you fluent in any other signed languages or visual communication modes?
7. Do you believe INAL provides effective training for teachers who are not fluent in LSE? For family members of the students?
8. Are you knowledgeable about the local Deaf culture? Do you have any training or experience in the local Deaf culture? Explain your training or experience.
9. If you feel knowledgeable about the local Deaf culture, do you think your knowledge helps you relate to and understand your students?
10. Do you believe that your students can communicate with you clearly and effectively? Do you think you can communicate with your students clearly and effectively? Why or why not?
11. Do you have any suggestions as to how communication access can improve in the classroom?
12. Do you believe INAL's academic services for students outside of class are successful at improving student achievement? What academic services do you think are the most successful? Least successful?
13. Do students have the basic skills (i.e. reading, writing, basic math) that are required for learning?
14. What are your students' collective strengths? What are the top two skills that you would like to see your students improve in?
15. Are there any programs in place, or things that you do on your own, to deal with the problems you listed above?
16. How is that program working? Is it successful? Do you see any need for changes? (*ask separately for each program, individual activity mentioned*)
17. Are there any programs that you don't have, but you think would be useful to deal with (*whatever was identified above as problems*)?
18. How supportive is the administration of efforts to create programs to help improve academics for its students?
19. Do you believe the curriculum for each subject is standardized for each grade? Why or why not? Are there any discrepancies between the curriculum of one teacher and another?
20. Are there specialized curriculums for those who need it (i.e. Deaf children who also have additional disabilities)?
21. How do you assess student progress? Do you have plans for individual student goals?
22. If you have goals set for individual students, do you discuss them with parents?
23. What is the average class size?
24. Do you believe the school supports teacher professional development to work with deaf children or deaf children with special needs? How would you recommend the school improve teacher training and workshops?
25. Please review the following options. Rate them in order from the area that needs MOST improvement to the area that needs the LEAST improvement. (Options: LSE Skills, Faculty/Staff performance, curriculum, tutoring, lesson planning, scheduling, assessment skills, discipline, time on task (teachers), time on task (students)).

**Needs Assessment for Teachers and Staff (Timin, n.d.; World Federation, 2010; York and Atherton, 1989)**

Thank you for participating in this survey. We are conducting this survey as part of a needs assessment in an effort to see what components of *Instituto Nacional de Audición y Lenguaje* (INAL) are functioning well, and what needs improvement. This survey is for both teachers and staff. Once all data is collected, you will be informed of the results and may participate in a forum for helping the school become more successful. Thank you for taking a part in improving the school—we value your input.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, you may contact the researcher:

Natalie Delgado

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Please rate the degree to which you believe each of the following are possible inhibitors of student success AT YOUR SCHOOL.

Please comment on the need for improvement AT YOUR SCHOOL, for the following types of programs.

**\*ADD COMMENT BOX TO THE RIGHT ON SURVEY MONKEY (NOT POSSIBLE TO PREVIEW IN MS WORD)** (Instructions for Comment Box will be: Please feel free to elaborate on any answers you desire.)

Program	We already have a program like this	If <u>YES</u> , how effective is the program?  Not                      Very
---------	-------------------------------------	--

		Effective	Effective			
		1	2	3	4	5
Tutoring program to help students with basic reading skills	Yes No	1	2	3	4	5
Tutoring program to help students with general academics	Yes No	1	2	3	4	5
Program to help students improve social skills	Yes No	1	2	3	4	5
Program to help students improve professional skills for postsecondary education or a job	Yes No	1	2	3	4	5
Program to help students develop vocational skills if needed	Yes No	1	2	3	4	5
Program to increase communications between home and school	Yes No	1	2	3	4	5
Program to increase positive behavior support (i.e. promote a safe environment in the school and encourages better academic and behavioral outcomes)	Yes No	1	2	3	4	5
Program to increase the awareness of faculty and staff about how to work with and teach deaf and hard-of-hearing children	Yes No	1	2	3	4	5
Program to increase the fluency of parents in LSE and Deaf culture	Yes No	1	2	3	4	5

Program to involve parents in overall school improvement	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5
Program to involve parents in individual academic decisions and meetings for their children	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5
Program for students to maintain emotional health	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5

1. Please describe any other programs you think may be needed. [OPEN ENDED]
2. Do you believe staff/teachers are sensitive to the ethnic, linguistic, social, and cultural background of the students? (answer boxes marked “mostly, some, few, none”) YES/NO then COMMENT BOX
3. Do teachers and staff have clearly defined roles for promoting a good learning environment? (E.g. is there a person who is responsible for punishment? Is there a person who is responsible for psychological evaluation, etc.) YES/NO then COMMENT BOX
4. If there is an issue with a child’s academics, behavior, or parental support, do you know who to contact for help? YES/NO then COMMENT BOX
5. Do you have any other comments about the school you want to add about its strengths or its weaknesses? [OPEN ENDED]

### **Cuestionario para Evaluar las Necesidades**

**Para Profesores (Timin, n.d.; World Federation, 2010; York and Atherton, 1989)**

Gracias por participar en ésta encuesta. La llevamos acabo para hacer una evaluación del Instituto Nacional de Audición y Lenguaje (INAL) de que esta funcionando bien y que necesita mejorar. Esta encuesta es para profesores solamente y esta dirigida para comprender cual es su entendimiento de la Sociedad Sorda, cual es la forma de comunicación usada para enseñar cuales son las calificaciones de los profesores y cuales son las estrategias a seguir en las clases. Hay otra encuesta para ambos profesores y empleados que también la pueden tomar. Una vez que este cuestionario este completo usted será informado de los resultados y usted puede participar en una discusión de cómo se puede ayudar a la institución para que sea mas eficiente. Gracias por participar en el mejoramiento de la escuela—su colaboración es importante.

Si usted tiene preguntas, comentarios o preocupaciones puede contactar la persona que esta haciendo el estudio:

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Gallaudet University

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Washington, D.C. 20002

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### **EVALUACIÓN: PROFESOR**

- 1) ¿Es usted sordo o oyente?
- 2) ¿Que edad tiene usted?
- 3) ¿En general cuanto tiempo ha estado ensenando? ¿Cuanto tiempo ha sido su enseñanza a estudiantes sordos?
- 4) ¿Cual es su mas alto grado de educación? ¿Que títulos o certificados tiene?



- 5) ¿Es usted fluido en Lenguaje de señas Ecuatorianas (LSE)? Si no lo es ¿qué tan bien cree usted que puede comunicarse en LSE—signos básicos solamente o puede mantener una conversación?
- 6) ¿Es usted fluido en otros lenguajes de señas o comunicaciones visuales?
- 7) Cree usted que INAL puede dar entrenamiento adecuado a profesores que no son fluidos en LSE? ¿Lo mismo que para familiares del estudiante?
- 8) ¿Tiene conocimiento de la comunidad sorda local? ¿Tiene entrenamiento o experiencia con esta comunidad? Explique su experiencia o entrenamiento.
- 9) Si tiene conocimiento de la comunidad sorda ¿cree que su conocimiento le ayuda a relacionarse o entender a sus estudiantes?
- 10) ¿Cree que sus estudiantes pueden comunicarse clara y efectivamente con usted? ¿Cree que usted puede comunicarse clara y efectivamente con ellos? Explique por que o por que no pasa esto.
- 11) ¿Tiene alguna sugerencia de cómo obtener acceso a mejor comunicación en clase?
- 12) ¿Cree que los servicios académicos adicionales del INAL son efectivos para mejorar el aprendizaje de los estudiantes? ¿Qué servicios académicos han sido mas exitosos y cuales menos?
- 13) ¿Tienen los estudiantes conocimientos básicos necesarios para aprender? Por ejemplo: Lectura, escritura, matemáticas básicas, etc.
- 14) ¿Cuáles son los conocimientos mas fuerte de sus estudiantes? ¿Cuales son los dos conocimientos básicos mas importantes que los estudiantes podrían mejorar?
- 15) ¿Hay algún programa o procedimiento que usted usa para mejorar los conocimientos expresados arriba?
- 16) ¿Como esta éste programa trabajando? ¿Es exitoso? ¿ve alguna necesidad de cambiarlo? *(Explique por separado que es lo necesario para cada programa.)*
- 17) ¿Hay algún programa que ustedes no tienen ahora, pero les gustaría usarlo para mejor manejo el clase?
- 18) ¿Tienes la colaboración de la administración para crear programas para mejorar la enseñanza a los estudiantes?
- 19) ¿Cree que la materia esta estandarizado para cada grado? ¿Por que o por que no? ¿Hay discordancia en la enseñanza de la misma materia de un profesor a otro?
- 20) ¿Hay clases especiales para los que necesitan? Por ejemplo, un niño que tiene otras problemas a más de ser sordo.
- 21) ¿Como se evalúa el progreso estudiantil? ¿Tiene algún plan para las logros de cada estudiante?
- 22) ¿Si tiene metas para cada estudiante, las discute con sus padres?
- 23) ¿Cuál es el tamaño promedio de cada clase?
- 24) ¿Cree que la institución apoya el desarrollo profesional de los profesores para trabajar con niños sordos o niños sordos con necesidades especiales? ¿Que recomendaría a la escuela para mejorar la preparación de los profesores?
- 25) Por favor revise las siguientes opciones y póngalas en orden desde la que necesita mejorar más hasta la que necesita mejorar menos:

OPCIONES: Habilidad en LSE, rendimiento de los profesores y empleados, plan de estudio, clases privadas, preparación de lecciones, hacer horarios, asesoría de habilidades, disciplina, tiempo en hacer tareas (profesores), tiempo en hacer tareas (estudiantes).

**Cuestionario para Evaluar las Necesidades  
Para Profesores y Facultad (Timin, n.d.; World Federation, 2010; York and Atherton,  
1989)**

Gracias por participar en ésta encuesta. La llevamos acabo para hacer una evaluación del Instituto Nacional de Audición y Lenguaje (INAL) de que esta funcionando bien y que necesita mejorar. Esta encuesta es para profesores y empleados. Hay otra encuesta solamente para profesores que también la pueden tomar. Una vez que este cuestionario este completo usted será informado de los resultados y usted puede participar en una discusión de cómo se puede ayudar a la institución para que sea mas eficiente. Gracias por participar en el mejoramiento de la escuela—su colaboración es importante.

Si usted tiene preguntas, comentarios o preocupaciones puede contactar la persona que esta haciendo el estudio:

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Por favor evalúe en que cantidad el programa puede tener factores negativos para que el estudiante sea exitoso en la escuela.

Por favor haga un comentario de que necesita mejorar en la escuela para los siguientes tipos de programas.

**\*SEE COMMENT BOX INFORMATION IN ENGLISH SURVEY\***

Programa	Ya tenemos un programa como este	Si contesta <u>SI</u> , es efectivo?				
		No es efectivo.		Es muy efectivo.		
		1	2	3	4	5
Programa individual para ayudar a los estudiantes con su lectura básica.	Si No	1	2	3	4	5
Programa para ayudar a los estudiantes con enseñanza general.	Si No	1	2	3	4	5
Programa para enseñar a los estudiantes a mejorar sus habilidades sociales.	Si No	1	2	3	4	5
Programa educacional para obtener un trabajo o estudiar después de la secundaria.	Si No	1	2	3	4	5
Programa para ayudar a desarrollar habilidades vocacionales.	Si No	1	2	3	4	5
Programa para aumentar la comunicación entre la escuela y el hogar.	Si No	1	2	3	4	5
Programa para incrementar acciones positivas en la escuela (Ejemplo: Promover un ambiente sano y mejor conducta).	Si No	1	2	3	4	5
Programa para aumentar la capacidad de los profesores y empleades en como trabajar y enseñar sordos.	Si No	1	2	3	4	5
Programa para aumentar la habilidad de los padres en LSE y de la sociedad sorda.	Si No	1	2	3	4	5

Programa para hacer participar a los padres en todo lo que pueda mejorarse en la escuela.	Si	No	1	2	3	4	5
Programa para hacer participar a los padres en las decisiones académicas en reuniones para los hijos.	Si	No	1	2	3	4	5
Programa para que los estudiantes mantengan salud emocional.	Si	No	1	2	3	4	5

### COMENTARIOS

- 1) Por favor explique si pueden hacerse otros programas que sean necesarios.
- 2) ¿Cree usted que la facultad tenga un mejor entendimiento del origen social y cultural de los estudiantes? [Marque: No/Poco/Algo/Bastante]
- 3) ¿Tienen los profesores y el personal metas definidas para promover un buen ambiente para aprendizaje? Ejemplo: ¿Hay una persona responsable para dar castigo? ¿Hay alguna persona que haga evaluación psicológica? [SI/NO, haga comentarios.]
- 4) Si aparece un problema con el estudio, conducta, o soporte de los padres de un niño, ¿sabe con quien tiene que comunicarse si necesita ayuda? [SI/NO, haga comentarios.]
- 5) ¿Tiene algún otro comentario que funcione bien o que necesita mejorar de la escuela? [Comentario: (Use todo el espacio que desee)]

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