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PUPILIZATION OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

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In order to achieve learning there must be a climate which encourages internalization of that which is being taught. This necessitates a consistently intimate relationship between the teacher and the pupils, which makes possible growth in curiosity, exploration, discovery and internalization of that knowledge as well as readiness and confidence for the implementation of that knowledge in other learning situations. In this way, the pupil actually uses that which he has learned in order to learn more, thus promoting the development of a unity encompassing teacher and pupil within the learning process and the learning experiences in which both participate.

According to Brown and Precious,

Teachers need to have the sensitivity to build up the intimacy in the teaching-learning situation ideally necessary for intellectual growth. (1:27)

In order to establish and maintain this intimacy necessary for an effective teaching-learning relationship, there must be consistent opportunity for closeness and lack of disruption. This is important for all students but for students with learning difficulties it is absolutely essential for them to establish this close teacher-pupil relationship which makes possible learning and its retention as well as implementation. In order to develop such an intimate relationship with pupils—especially those with learning difficulties, an instructional program needs to be designed in order to meet their individual needs.

SETTING FOR THE STUDY

In the fall of 1974, a class containing many pupils with prior learning difficulty was organized in order to make available to them such an opportunity for a learning program designed to meet their needs and to be responsive to their interests and strengths. The setting for this project was a school which had recently been included in Title I of the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Due to this inclusion, various and often incompatible philosophies as well as markedly increased personnel and scheduling of activities resulted in disruptions of ongoing classroom learning programs thus introducing numerous and disruptive pressures on the pupils, teachers and remainder of the school staff as determined from their reactions and voluntary comments.

PUPILIZATION

Rather than fitting the pupils into such a program, it was deemed more beneficial for the pupils in the experimental group to have an instructional program which was tailored to their needs and responsive to them. The basis for pupilization of the learning program included self-pacing, self-selection, self-direction, self-evaluation, self-discipline and skill implementation.

1. *Self-pacing*—The pupils would work at their own speed depending upon their progress and interests. Standardized time periods and scheduling were incompatible with regard to individual interest and absorption span of the pupils.
2. *Self-selection*—The pupilized approach derived its content and merger of all subject areas from the diverse and varied interests of the pupils who freely related to the diversified learning opportunities consistently made available to them and indicated to the teacher the degree to which these opportunities and activities were compatible with their interests and responsive to their needs.
3. *Self-direction*—Individualized tutoring was available throughout the school day for the pupils. The tutoring was done by the teacher on an informal and continuing basis in response to the needs of the pupils. This tutoring provided enrichment as well as remediation or simply exploration of new ideas in whatever area, depth or direction the pupil indicated. Thus, with teacher guidance and support, the pupil was free to select the direction and focus of his learning and enrichment activities. Pupil participation in planning, decision-making and project selection was emphasized throughout the program. Records were kept by teacher and pupils with regard to all activities.
4. *Self-evaluation*—Actual evaluated work and records of activities undertaken and completed by pupils were kept. Self-checking their own work with teacher guidance enabled pupils to discover the extent of their progress and to learn from the errors by discovering the reason for their mistakes. Self-competition rather than competition with others was stressed. Pupils were eagerly encouraged to do their best and to grow in terms of their ability to do that.

Progress reports were written by the teacher following consultation with pupils and joint evaluation of individual pupil growth. These reports were in the form of a letter written to the parents of each pupil, discussing in detail the strengths and needs of the pupils, rather than the use of standard grades and standard report card forms. Evaluated pupil work accompanied each progress report. In this way, the progress reporting was also increasingly individualized. The pupil, teacher, principal and parents signed each progress report.

5. *Self-discipline*—With this constantly increasing pupil involvement there came an increase in the sharing of the control in the classroom and in the learning program with a resulting growth in the partnership between the teacher and the pupils. With the control increasingly

shared between teacher and pupils, the pupils developed an increased self control and an increased capacity for self-discipline as they engaged increasingly in self-pacing, self-selection and direction and self-evaluation.

6. *Skill Implementation* – Learning centers within the classroom provided pupils with various ways to implement their acquired skills interrelating subject areas so that learning could be reinforced and extended. Some examples included:
 - a. Acquired *math* skills were implemented in cooking projects, science experiments, construction and sewing projects. Concepts of time were strengthened through the planning and projection of activities done by the pupils.
 - b. Acquired *reading* skills were implemented in individual research projects selected by each pupil according to his or her own interests. These projects involved *art* work, *handwriting*, *language* skills and *spelling*.
 - c. *Acquired written* and *oral language* skills were involved in the creation and presentation of puppet shows, dramatic representation and also culmination programs developed and performed by the pupils for their parents at the close of each unit of their learning.
 - d. Acquired *science* skills were implemented in the federal ecology project initiated and completed by the class. They planted and maintained the school garden as well as other planted areas on the campus. The pupils also pursued a beautification project within the community. During the school year they purchased an incubator and raised quail and chickens. The class was awarded certificates of excellence by The Federal Environmental Agency as a result of their prodigious efforts to improve the environment. As a result of this entire experience, they learned much about science.
 - e. All acquired skills mentioned plus *music*, *physical education* and *practical arts* were implemented in the culmination programs and also the open house program which were planned, written and presented by the pupils for their parents. The pupils wrote and sang their own songs (some in Spanish), created and performed their own square dances as part of their physical education program and also used practical arts in the construction of scenery and the making of their costumes.

The basic aim of the pupilized instructional program was to create a relaxed atmosphere based on mutual trust, understanding, respect and caring so that the pupils could feel free to pursue their intellectual curiosity and to become fully involved in experiences which were designed to encourage interest and growth. Pupilization begins with the pupils, is responsive to their needs and focuses on valuing the students for themselves, their growth and their efforts to learn. This creates the security and confidence necessary to make possible internalization learning which is needed in order for the pupils to make progress.

The school principal recognized that in order to achieve recognition for

the uniqueness of the pupils, the uniqueness and individuality of the teacher also needs to be recognized. The pupilization of the learning program for the pupils involved in this study was accomplished by the classroom teacher in the milieu of the classroom, and the increasing intimacy of that close and trusting relationship between the teacher and pupils was not disrupted by any other programs or personnel.

GOAL OF THE STUDY

The purpose for the study was to investigate the effectiveness of a pupilized program with pupils at a third and fourth grade level whose prior learning difficulties reflect those of pupils representative of, but not necessarily limited to, those schools designated as recipients of Title I funds under the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The hypothesis tested in this study was that there would be no significant difference in the amount of gain in oral and silent reading achievement, mathematics and attitudes made by pupils following one year of instruction using a pupilized approach.

SAMPLE

The pupils participating in this study included sixteen boys and fourteen girls ranging in age from eight years, one month to ten years, seven months with a mean age of eight years, six months. Two of the pupils spoke only Spanish. Nineteen pupils in this group spoke another language in addition to English. The group included seventeen pupils of Mexican background, and one each of Cuban, Costa Rican, Guatemalan, Nicaraguan and Colombian background with ten pupils of English-speaking background. One third of the class had been retained at a prior grade level. The school is located close to a federal housing project where some of the pupils live, while the remainder of the students reside in homes and apartments within the community. Their parents work at skilled and semi-skilled jobs.

PROCEDURE

The pupilized program was approved in September, 1974. Pre-testing and post-testing was completed in October, 1974 and May, 1975, respectively. In addition to the *Kuhlmann Test* for intelligence the following evaluative instruments were used:

1. *Gates MacGinitie Reading Tests* measured silent reading skills such as vocabulary, comprehension, speed and accuracy.
2. *Spache Reading Test* measured oral reading skills.
3. Mathematics tests were used to measure operation skills involved in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.
4. *California Test* was used to measure attitudes.

Statistical comparisons were made of the differences between means

resulting from pre-testing and post-testing. Significance of differences were subjected to the “t” test in which a ratio comparison was made of the size of the difference of the means to the size of the standard error of the difference of the paired pre and post scores. Within the established degrees of freedom, rejection of the hypothesis was examined at the .05 and .01 levels.

RESULTS

Pupils evidenced a .01-level superiority over their initial levels with respect to silent reading skills involving vocabulary, comprehension, speed and accuracy; oral reading skills, mathematics involving operational skills and also their attitudes.

The significantly increased post scores with regard to all criteria indicate the improvement which can be achieved with even educationally handicapped pupils with an educational approach such as the pupilized program. It is important to consider the following ramifications:

TABLE I

TEST	t calculation		Level of Significance	
	Grade 3	Grade 4	3rd Grade	4th Grade
Gates MacGinitie Reading				
Vocabulary	3.35	4.10	t at .05	2.09
Comprehension	5.29	3.54	t at .01	2.86
Speed Accuracy	5.10	3.52		
Mathematics				
Addition	16.80			
Subtraction	7.00		t at .05	2.04
Multiplication	14.70		t at .01	2.73
Division	12.46			
California Test				
Self-Reliance	5.00			
Sense of Personal Worth	3.46			
Sense of Personal Freedom	5.20			
Feeling of Belonging	5.13			
Withdrawing Tendency	4.93			
Nervous Symptoms	5.66			
Personal Adjustment	2.81		t at .05	2.04
Social Standards	4.88		t at .01	2.75
Social Skills	6.73			
Anti-Social Tendencies	3.32			
Family Relations	3.28			
School Relations	3.74			
Community Relations	2.78			
Social Adjustment	5.61			
Total Adjustment	3.00			

Spache Oral Reading Test

Average gain of 16.6 months for 8 months
of actual instruction

1. Stressing application as well as acquisition of skills makes possible diversified growth. For example, reading gains in vocabulary were expanded into growth in comprehension, speed and accuracy through *pupil use* of vocabulary in various projects and presentations appropriate to pupil's interest, and involving the merging of *all* subject areas.
2. Within an environment of alternatives and pupil involvement in the direction, evaluation and pacing of his individual learning program there develops increasing pupil self-discipline which contributes significantly to the ability of the pupil to eliminate disruption of his own educational program and thus increase his ability to learn and grow.
3. Teacher responsiveness to pupils developed through sensitivity to their needs, development of intimacy in the teaching-learning relationship and individualized instruction such as tutoring assisted in developing the receptivity which in turn made possible the internalization of knowledge necessary for the acquisition and retention of knowledge.
4. Consistency in the teacher-pupil relationship encouraged the confidence necessary for growth.
5. Significantly increased confidence on the part of the pupils was reflected in significant increases in their feelings of self-worth, self-reliance and belonging with significant decreases in nervousness, withdrawal and anti-social tendencies. Furthermore, their increased confidence led also to significant increases in attitude scores related to family, school and community and to demonstrated behavior which indicated an increased ability to cope more adequately with conditions in a variety of situations both inside and outside the classroom situation.
6. In addition to increased confidence, coping ability and learning skills, it is important to note that during the school year there were no behavior difficulties and no office referrals for these pupils. However, records indicate prior difficulties with regard to the behavior of many of these same pupils.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The benefits available for pupils through pupilization of instruction should be made possible for pupils and teachers who wish to become involved in such a program. Schools could be designated where such a program could operate with transfers available to pupils and teachers who are interested in such participation. Such schools could also serve as in-service centers where other teachers, parents, administrators and other interested individuals could visit to observe demonstrations involving the pupilization process and thus incorporate such an approach into their own programs with children.

It is also recommended that where possible, teachers should teach the same group of pupils for more than one year. This continuity is beneficial for both teacher and pupils, especially in terms of eliminating disruption and thereby facilitating learning. It is anticipated that the retention of

pupils, with all of its concomitant ramifications could be minimized with such a continuity used in conjunction with a pupilized approach to learning which facilitates enrichment as well as remediation.

SUMMARY

It is important to note how inexpensively this pupilization process and the accompanying benefits for pupils can be achieved. It is even more important to note that uninterrupted intimacy in the teaching-learning relationship with the teacher plus increased individualization of instruction thus made possible due to lack of disruption, resulted in additional gains for pupils. This is of enormous importance in increasing the effectiveness of the educational program for all pupils. It is of special importance for educationally handicapped pupils for whom school may be the only opportunity to develop and maintain such a growth-oriented relationship between adults and pupils as is made available with the pupilization approach. Pupils and their growth are valued consistently by the teacher, thus giving the pupils the opportunity to develop confidence in themselves, their strengths and their ability to learn.

REFERENCES

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