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THE PAST AND FUTURE OF THE PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL CLINIC AT WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

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The scientific movement in education was well under way when Witmer established the Psychological Clinic at the University of Pennsylvania and began his work with children showing evidence of educational maladjustment. It is fortunate for mankind that Witmer had the versatility to set aside his laboratory experimentation in order to help a classroom teacher overcome a spelling difficulty of one of her pupils. The scientific movement in education had produced the first Psycho-Educational Clinic. New concepts were introduced into the theory and practice of education. These were precise observation, accurate description, and tested generalizations. These additions made educational changes possible and then inevitable. Clinics were established and psychological laboratories were opened for the study of the deviant individual. Scientific principles were applied in the field of education and psychologists and educators began to work together. It is the purpose of this article to set forth the history, functions, procedures, and growth trends of the Psycho-Educational Clinic at Western Michigan University.

History

The Psycho-Educational Clinic was organized in the fall of 1932 and was the first clinic of its kind to be established in Michigan outside of Detroit (3). The clinic began its operations in cramped quarters in the Administration Building. When it moved to the new Health Service Building in September, 1939, it obtained larger quarters on the third floor and thus was enabled to expand its services. From the beginning the clinic had been responsible for the administration of scholastic aptitude tests to entering students of Western Michigan University. It carried on this task until 1950 when the work was transferred to the recently created Research Department. One of the clinic's chief activities, throughout its thirty-one years of service, has

been to examine those students with academic difficulties who have been referred to the clinic by the campus school, public schools and by college teachers and to suggest or attempt corrective work. Impetus to this aspect of the clinic's work was provided in January, 1932, when the W. K. Kellogg Foundation began referral of cases to the Psycho-Educational Clinic from seven counties in Southwestern Michigan. During the same year the members of the clinic staff introduced a new course, Introduction to Learning and Adjustment, which was intended to help Western Michigan University students who had study difficulties. In September 1944 a Reading Laboratory for college students was established, the first of its kind to be opened by any college or university in Michigan.

In April of 1942 the clinic began its association with the Bronson School of Nursing. This work consists of testing and interviewing all prospective student nurses who wish to begin their education at the Bronson School of Nursing. In 1942 the clinic also initiated vocational counseling for students at Western Michigan University and in 1944 this service was extended to returned servicemen. In 1946, for a period of six years, the Psycho-Educational Clinic examined and counseled men and women referred by the Rehabilitation Department of the State of Michigan. Since 1946 the staff of the clinic has been responsible for the administration of General Educational Development Tests to those for whom they are required.

In the fall of 1934 the clinic began the education of student clinicians, an activity which has been a major function of the clinic since that time. Beginning in 1940 and extending through the year 1954 the staff of the Psycho-Educational Clinic was responsible for the supervision of local interviewers for the Psychological Corporation of New York. During the summer of 1949 a series of Reading Demonstrations and Discussions was initiated as an integral part of the course, Educational Therapy in Reading. Demonstrations have been conducted each succeeding summer and provide an opportunity for teachers to observe developmental and corrective reading. Students participate in the work of the clinic by serving as assistants in the Reading Laboratory and by observing the clinical examination and treatment of children. Foreign students from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Japan, India and Australia have shared in these experiences. In order to encourage graduate students to express their ideas and to make available to classroom teachers abstracts of current

research, *Reading Horizons*, a quarterly, was established in 1960 by the personnel of the clinic.

Functions

The primary function of the clinic is to provide educational and psychological services to college students, parents, teachers and social agencies making referrals. A secondary purpose of the Psycho-Educational Clinic is to provide educational and clinical experiences for mature students enrolled at Western Michigan University who are preparing to do educational and psychological work with children and adults. Specific activities carried on by the clinic are listed.

- ★ Provide clinical and developmental treatment for children, high school and college students;
- ★ Furnish consultative services in reading for teachers and schools primarily in Southwestern Michigan;
- ★ Provide personnel for Adult Reading and for the course, Introduction to Learning and Adjustment;
- ★ Administer, score and interpret General Educational Development Tests for adults who have been unable to meet requirements for high school graduation;
- ★ Interview, examine, select and report candidates for nursing education at the Bronson School of Nursing.
- ★ Provide students in education and psychology an opportunity to see the administration of educational and clinical tests and the procedures employed in interviewing children and adults.
- ★ Provide students in education an opportunity to observe developmental work in reading with children and individuals at all levels and to make it possible for mature students to do individual and group work under the supervision of staff personnel.

Procedures

In providing clinical and developmental treatment for children and adults, the staff of the Psycho-Educational Clinic engages in three formal activities. Cases are referred to the Psycho-Educational Clinic from the public schools, parents, physicians, and social and health

agencies in areas adjacent to Kalamazoo. In dealing with children, no case is accepted without the concurrence or recommendation of the family physician. College students are referred to the clinic, the course Introduction to Learning and Adjustment, and to Adult Reading by the Counseling Office, the Registrar, and other faculty members. Three procedures are briefly described.

Clinical Procedures

Various educational and psychological procedures are followed in studying the performance of individuals seen in the clinic, however, in each case presented to observers, a careful and somewhat detailed history is obtained which consists of (1) a definite statement of the problem, (2) family history, (3) developmental and medical history, (4) school history, and (5) clinical data and educational measurements. Interviews are held with parents and teacher in order to study their reactions and to fill in the informational gaps often found in the histories. Parents, teacher and students have opportunities to observe through one-way mirrors and by means of microphones the child's performance on clinical tests and his reactions in interviews. When advisable, instructional activities are carried on and demonstrations of developmental techniques are provided. After sufficient study of the child has been made, the case is reviewed at a staff meeting attended by parents and observed by students. An attempt is made by the group to formulate a tentative diagnosis and to outline corrective and developmental procedures. In each case, physical, psychological and sociological factors are considered along with educational and school data. Parents, teacher and staff members cooperate in setting forth a plan for mitigating or alleviating the primary causal factors. Stenographic records facilitate report writing.

Individual and Group Therapy

Individual therapy and group instruction are provided by the staff of the clinic at scheduled times throughout each week of the school year. It is possible for teachers, graduate and undergraduate students to observe this work from behind one-way mirrors and by means of microphones. After each demonstration an opportunity is provided for these students to discuss what they have observed with the teacher in charge of the demonstration. Frequently mature stu-

dents are expected to aid in the various instructional activities. The value of participation is stressed.

Classroom Instruction

Aims, materials and procedures employed in the course, Introduction to Learning and Adjustment, are designed to orient the student to college living. This how-to-study course shows the student how to plan a work-study schedule, how to take notes, how to prepare for and write examinations, how to make a vocational choice, and how to solve other educational and social problems. Directive and non-directive counseling is employed with many of these students. Studies show that individuals completing this course make a statistically significant gain in point-hour-ratio over and above that made by students not enrolled in the course.

In Adult Reading instructional and developmental procedures are employed in helping adults improve their reading skills as they do their regular office or academic work. Each class period consists of lecture, demonstration and a laboratory period in which the student does both guided and free reading. Measures of reading skills are administered at the beginning and end of the semester in order that students may objectively evaluate improvement in reading. Evaluation studies of the effectiveness of Adult Reading indicate that the materials and procedures employed are of value in improving not only the reading ability of college students but their point-hour-ratios as well. Advanced students at Western Michigan University can receive practical experience in the study and treatment of reading problems by assisting in this course.

Growth Trends

During the early years the staff of the Psycho-Educational Clinic placed their emphasis upon diagnosis rather than upon treatment. School authorities and others making referrals implemented the recommendations of the clinic and cooperated with the staff in making further modifications of treatment as required by the exigency of the case. Beginning in 1944 the individuals selected for consideration by the clinic were primarily ones with reading difficulties. This change from the study of behavior problems to the diagnosis and treatment of reading disabilities was the result of insistent demand by parents,

teachers and school administrators. Requests for psychological service have tripled and yet only 12 per cent of the cases referred to the clinic could be accepted. Teachers wanted definite instruction in regard to treatment. They asked to see demonstrations with individuals and small groups and to have an opportunity to ask questions and discuss what they observed. Group conferences became the natural sequence of observed facts. Teachers and parents were encouraged to make careful observations and with the aid of staff members set forth temporary, yet untested, generalizations. Greater and greater emphasis has been placed upon developmental procedures designed to meet the changing need of children and adults referred to the clinic. At the present time it is possible for undergraduate and graduate students to observe in accordance with a daily schedule the work being done with individuals at all levels. It is obvious that the growth trends of the clinic have been away from the study of behavior problems and toward both a clinical and thorough developmental procedure for the improvement of basic language skills. These more unified activities of the clinic are not only diagnostic in nature but therapeutic as well. Furthermore an emphasis has been placed upon the training of teachers and school psychologists. This gradual shift in emphasis has also manifested itself in the nature of the research published and the contributions to the literature made by the staff. For example, research titles published from 1947 to 1963 show this trend.

1947—A Combined Projective and Psychogalvanic Response Technique for Investigating Certain Affective Processes

1950—A Combined Oral Reading and Psychogalvanic Response Technique for Investigating Certain Reading Abilities of College Students

1952—Some Factors Which Differentiate College Freshmen Having Lowest and Highest Point-Hour-Ratios

1961—The Preparation and Responsibility of Secondary Teachers in the Field of Reading

1963—A Comparative Study of the Attitudes of Parents of Superior and Inferior Readers Toward Certain Child Rearing Practices, the Value of Reading, and the Development of Language Skills and Experiential Background Related to Reading

During the period 1949 to 1962 five textbooks used at the college level in the fields of reading and educational adjustment have grown

out of the work of the clinic. These publications show the movement away from a general interest in the behavioral aspect of the individual to a more specific manifestation of educational adjustment. This trend was from the negative to the positive, from diagnosis to treatment, and from observation to participation. It should not be assumed, however, that the Psycho-Educational Clinic has forsaken the discipline of psychology for that of education. Instead, psychological principles are applied in the field of education by a staff of three psychologists, two of whom are certified as Consulting Psychologists, the highest rank recognized in the state. The staff of the clinic is committed to the concept that the global approach to educational maladjustment is both sound in principle and effective in practice.

A growth trend is manifest by the activities of the clinic staff in work with parents. Studies (4, 5, 6) show that attitudes of parents can be causal and contributing factors in the educational maladjustment of their children and that these attitudes can be modified. Evidently, in some instances, parents need help as well as their children. Consequently, a non-directive approach is being utilized by staff members in group conferences with fathers and mothers of children with reading difficulties. The future may see this work greatly expanded.

What is the future of the Psycho-Educational Clinic at Western Michigan University? Will its growth pattern become more unified without the dangers of specialization? Will the clinic be more widely used by the Department of Psychology and School of Education? Will more and more of the students on the campus come for help? It is possible that trends of the past will develop into blueprints of the future. This is especially true if unvarying leadership in the clinic can be maintained and if every member of the staff is alert to the possibilities of the future. An autonomous Psycho-Educational Clinic committed to the idea of service and dedicated to the concept of professional preparation of students in psychology and education can make a significant contribution to the youth of our time.

“What is already passed is not more fixed than the certainty that what is future will grow out of what has already passed, or is now passing.”

—Cheever

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