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ABSTRACT
                College freshmen enrolled in an introductory course
in reading instruction were trained to use programed tutoring
techniques with children in local elementary schools. The programed
tutoring guidelines specified in detail how and what to teach; skills
taught in the program were oral reading, comprehension, and
word-attack skills. In the pilot project for the program, 25 college
students first met on campus for 18 hours of training in the
techniques of programed tutoring, including rehearsal of all aspects
of the tutoring. Each student was then assigned three first-grade and
second-grade children who were having difficulty learning to read;
the children were tutored in 15-minute sessions for the rest of the
semester. Informal evaluation by the elementary school teachers and
principal indicated that the children's reading achievement was
markedly accelerated. The college students found the course a
valuable introduction to classroom teaching, and the university noted
an increase in favorable public relations with the local schools and
with the community. Popularity of the course with the college
students and requests by elementary school personnel for more tutors
have led to the expansion of the program. To date, 116 students have
tutored 283 children. (GW)

COLLEGE FROSH IN PRESERVICE READING TEACHING: USING

PROGRAMED TUTORING WITH SLOW-LEARNING PUPILS

A Paper Presented By

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COLLEGE FROSH IN PRESERVICE READING TEACHING: USING

PROGRAMED TUTORING WITH SLOW-LEARNING PUPILS

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Programed Tutoring is a set of tutoring techniques based upon

principles of learning and programed instruction. Developed by a group

of psychologists at Indiana University, the techniques have been well

researched over more than fourteen years and have been reported in such

journals as the Reading Research Quarterly (Volume 3, Number 3,

Spring, 1968).

The tutoring procedures are simple and systematic, and they are

designed so that tutors may learn them in about 18 hours of instruction.

The procedures are especially suited to tutors with limited academic

qualifications and are not used to replace professional reading

instruction. Rather, Programed Tutoring is most effective with children

when it is used to supplement conventional instruction. The tutor's

behavior is controlled by 1) tutoring programs which specify in detail

how teaching is to be done, and 2) content programs which clearly

describe what is to be taught and the order in which it is to be

presented. The materials used for instruction are the same basal

textbook materials as those used by the classroom teacher.

Much of this information was published in a local newspaper reprint
of William Raspberry's column from the Washington Post. When I read about
Programed Tutoring and Raspberry's comments describing the unusually
high achievement of disadvantaged children who had been so tutored, I
decided to investigate the feasibility of including Programed Tutoring
into the undergraduate program at Southwest Texas State University in
San Marcos.

Located 30 miles south of Austin, our university has a student
population of just over 13,000 students. Traditionally a teacher-
training institution, the university has grown considerably in the past
ten years. Part of that growth has involved the development of new
programs, among them a "concentration" or minor in reading instruction.

As teacher of the freshman level first reading course of the
concentration, I had been searching for a way to place freshmen early in
their college careers into the local schools for first-hand experience
with children. (There is nothing so sad as a college senior who
discovers during student teaching that she/he really does not like
teaching or children.) On the other hand, I knew that the local teachers
had grown weary and wary of yet another group of college student
participants in classrooms.

Programed Tutoring, with its highly systematic procedures, seemed
the ideal vehicle to use to provide freshmen opportunities to work with
local children. Because the materials are used in specific ways,
and because the tutor makes no decisions about how to teach or what to
teach, children are protected from exposure to poor judgment and poor

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teaching techniques.

Based upon the information presented in the Raspberry column, I

wrote to Dr. Phillip Harris, National Director of Programed Tutoring, at

Indiana University. His prompt reply brought a wealth of research

information and the suggestion that I visit Programed Tutoring projects

in the Houston Independent School District. Following his suggestion,

I went to Houston and watched high school students, who were enrolled in

remedial reading classes, tutoring inner-city primary children successfully.

And, to my surprise and delight, I also saw a group of gifted black

sixth grade children tutoring slow-learning black first graders. These

experiences convinced me that Programed Tutoring was just what we

needed in the reading concentration, and so I set about making all

the bureaucratic arrangements which enabled us one year later to

launch the new project.

To date, the attempt at Southwest Texas State University is the

first to incorporate Programed Tutoring procedures into teacher training

in reading, according to the National Director of Programed Tutoring.

Pilot Project

During the spring semester of 1976, the Pilot Project in Programed

Tutoring was begun at Crockett Elementary School in San Marcos, Texas.

Enrollment in one section of Education 1310, How to Teach Reading in the

Elementary School, was limited to 25 students, most of whom were freshmen.

This section was scheduled to meet on Tuesday-Thursday from 9:30 to

11:00 AM. Houghton Mifflin Publishers donated about $1,000 worth of

materials to the Project. This included 25 Tutorial I kits for the

college students and 50 pre-primers to supplement the book supply in

the school.

We chose Houghton Mifflin Tutorial I because the local school

district uses Houghton Mifflin materials as the core of reading instruction.

Other basal textbook publishers have similar kits to accompany their

own materials. Those publishers are Economy, Ginn, Harper & Row,

Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Macmillan, Rand McNally, and Scott Foresman.

Contents of the Houghton Mifflin kit include a Tutor's Guide

which prescribes all tutoring behaviors such as where to sit, how to

hold the book, how to record responses, how to elicit and reinforce

correct responses, what to say if the child does not respond, what to

say when the child gives an inaccurate response, the sequence of

instruction, and so on. The Guide is the tutor's bible. The kit also

includes a booklet of ditto masters for the record sheets, a packet of

vocabulary cards, and two spiral-bound books on comprehension and word

attack skills. These latter two items are used alternately with use

of the children's basal textbooks.

Because Programed Tutoring supplements classroom instruction, it

does not purport to cover the whole spectrum of reading skills. However,

the skills that are presented are covered in a very thorough manner

with far more practice than is usually provided in conventional classroom

instruction. The skills which are taught in the program are oral

reading, comprehension, and word attack. The Oral Reading Program

stresses accuracy in word-calling; Comprehension stresses the meanings

of words, sentences, and paragraphs and is taught in different materials

from those used in oral reading; Word Attack includes skills usually

developed in both readiness and decoding.

In the Tutor's Guide, there is a Master List which specifies

the order in which lessons and skills are presented. The program, after

initial readiness skills have been mastered, alternates use of the

children's textbooks with specific comprehension and word attack skills,

so there is some variety in instruction.

During the Pilot Project, the 25 college students met on campus for

the training period of four and a half weeks. The training procedures

involved careful explanation and demonstration of each part of the

program. They also included such specifics as appropriate demeanor

and dress while in the public school. Because this was the college

students' first exposure to reading methodology, some lectures included

more than the techniques of Programed Tutoring and presented such areas

as the nature of the reading act, terminology used in reading instruction,

child growth and development, and demonstration of conventional methods

and materials connected with reading instruction. However, most of the

time was spent on explanation of the eleven "item programs" or teaching

scripts in the Tutor's Guide. Following initial introduction to the

item programs, the students were paired for simulated tutoring--that is,

one student played the role of child reader and the other one played

the role of tutor. Thus, the college students rehearsed all aspects of

Programed Tutoring, including use of the basal textbooks and the

record sheets.

After four and a half weeks of on-campus training, meeting on

Tuesday and Thursday for a total of three hours per week, we set up

permanent car-pools and thereafter met six blocks away at the elementary
school.

The first and second grade teachers selected 75 children who
seemed to be having great difficulty learning to read. Each college
student was assigned three children; each child was to be tutored for
fifteen minutes. The only demands made on teacher time and energy were
the original selection of pupils, the assignment of pupils to specific
reading books indicating levels of achievement or lack of it, and
writing each child's name on a file folder. After these activities, no
further demands were made of teachers--a far different procedure from
that which they had previously experienced when they agreed to have
college students participate in the school.

The college students were to receive three hours of credit and
a letter grade. Beyond these, the students were, under carefully
controlled circumstances, to have their first opportunity to teach and
interact with elementary children. An example of a student's scheduled
activities follows:

> 9:30   Meet car-pool riders by Evans Hall; drive 6 blocks, park,
>   go to primary wing; find table in hall and ready materials
>   for instruction.
>
> 9:45   Get Ramon, his book, and file folder. Socialize for a
>   minute or two, then tutor on Lesson 46, 47 in Word Attack
>   Skills book; return Ramon to classroom.
>
> 10:00   Get Linda, her book, and her file. Socialize for a
>   minute or two, then tutor on Lesson 163 using pre-primer
>   Lions; return Linda to classroom.
>
> 10:15   Get Delia Mae, her book, and file. Socialize for a minute
>   or two, then tutor on Lessons 108, 109, 110 using Tigers;
>   return Delia Mae to classroom; return all folders.

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10:30   Meet car-pool riders at car, drive back to campus, park,
          go to next class by 11:00 AM.

Viewing this tight schedule, you no doubt have difficulty understanding

just how much learning occurred in the brief tutoring sessions. However,

the research on Programed Tutoring shows that fifteen-minute sessions

are long enough--longer times fatigue the child and produce little

additional achievement. Our own experiences in the Pilot Project bore

out the findings of the more formal research, and within weeks of the time

tutoring started, I began receiving written or verbal messages from both

the teachers and the principal. Some of the messages were "Something

has happened to Ramon. His whole attitude has changed toward school and

especially toward reading." "Joyce is volunteering to read aloud in

the reading group. She never used to do that." "René is finally

catching on to phonics. Whatever you are doing, please keep it up!"

And so it went. Children who had not been making much progress

in group instruction began gradually, and in some few cases even

suddenly, to make noticeable progress in learning to read. Here were

non-professionals getting results where professionals had not. Why?

As I observed children in conventional twenty-minute reading

groups, I saw that each child responded to a question or to print about

three times. On the other hand, in a fifteen-minute tutoring session

where the child was required by the program to be an active learner,

she/he responded 30 to 50 times. For slow-learning children, there is

generally too much passivity in most conventional reading groups.

When a slow-learner is the sole participant, she/he cannot be passive,

especially in a program which is designed on the stimulus-response

model.

At the close of the spring semester, there were three types of

evaluation of the Pilot Project: 1) by the university, 2) by the

college students, and 3) by the public school personnel. All

evaluations were favorable. Recommendations were made that Programed

Tutoring should become a permanent part of Education 1310, and the

principal of the school said, "Bring me all the tutors you can find.

This is one of the best things that has happened to our school."

We regret that we do not have hard data from pre- and post-tutoring

tests. Laws being what they are at present, we did not believe it

would be legal to provide some children with help and deny it to others.

This interpretation ruled out the use of experimental controls, and so

all evaluations of this Project were subjective.

Continuing Use of Programed Tutoring

Because of the success of the Pilot Project, enrollment in

Education 1310 grew. Word spread on campus that this course was

practical, challenging, and fun--and it could be taken for credit

either as part of the concentration in reading or as an education elective.

Since at our institution all other education courses begin at the junior

level, Education 1310 was especially attractive because it could be

taken by freshmen or sophomores. The course became so popular that

enrollment had to be limited, so as not to overcrowd the school. During

the fall of 1976, two sections of the course were offered: one on

Tuesday-Thursday from 9:30-11:00, and the other on Monday-Wednesday-

Friday from 9:00-10:00.

The school principal thought it best that college students not

tutor on Friday, thus leaving one day a week free for the teachers

to do extra activities in their classes. So, 50 college students
tutored 125 children. Many of the children were tutored on four
consecutive days and had two different tutors. The change of tutors was
not disturbing to the children because the tutoring behaviors are so
explicitly prescribed that both tutors did and said the same things.

At the close of the fall semester there was another extensive
although subjective evaluation. Again, the results were entirely
favorable.

During this present semester, the spring of 1977, 41 tutors have
tutored first and second grade children. Programed Tutoring has had such
an obvious impact upon children's reading achievement that the Learning
Coordinator of the elementary school scheduled one whole first grade
class to be tutored. To date, 116 college students enrolled in
Education 1310 have tutored 283 children at Crockett Elementary School
in San Marcos.

The results have been so successful in terms of children's
achievement that requests have come from other elementary schools in
the district to become a part of the Project. Plans call for the
Programed Tutoring Project to be extended to Travis Elementary School
next fall. Students enrolled in Education 1310, section 1, will go
to Travis on Monday and Wednesday and will tutor 50 children. Students
enrolled in section 2 will go to Crockett on Tuesday and Thursday
and will tutor 75 children.

University Advantages in the Program

The advantages to the schools seem obvious: they receive hundreds

of hours of free tutoring in reading, and, at the same time, teachers

derive carefully monitored assistance in the reading program, with

virtually no demands made on their time or energy.

On the other hand, what does the university gain?

We found several important advantages accruing to the university:

1. There has been an increase in favorable public relations with
the local community. Newspaper, radio, and word-of-mouth publicity has
created much good will in a community which, like most college towns,
has often had town-and-gown conflicts.

2. Students even at the freshman level have had an opportunity
for first-hand experience teaching reading on a continuing basis for
a whole semester. Based upon this experience, most the college students
decided they had wisely chosen education as their major area of study.
However, four of the 116 students decided to change majors, that they
were not interested in becoming teachers after all. To provide students
with the opportunity to make this discovery was one of the reasons for
selecting Programed Tutoring, so we were pleased that some chose to
drop further study of education.

3. Students who have had the tutoring experience have demonstrated
more realistic views about learning and failure to learn. This new
realism is reflected in the attitudes they exhibit in the succeeding
reading concentration courses. Students who have tutored appear to be
more motivated to study both the theoretical foundations of reading
and reading methodology.

4. Althou Programed Tutoring consists of rigidly prescribed teaching
behaviors which are designed for use by non-professionals rather than
by professionals, many of the factors involved are applicable to future
teaching of reading. During tutoring, the students experience the
importance of active involvement of the reader. They see that children
who respond often and whose accurate responses are immediately reinforced
learn better. They also see that a businesslike attitude on the part
of the teacher subdues behavior designed to detract from the learning
task. Above all, they find that mastery learning is possible for
so-called slow learners if they are provided with individual attention
and ample practice.

Conclusion

The Programed Tutoring Project at Southwest Texas State University
has been presented here as a model for any teacher training institution
desiring more student participation with real children in a school
setting. The specifics of Programed Tutoring · protect children from
unwise choices and unskilled teaching on the part of the tutors.
Further, the program is so specifically prescribed that very few demands
are made on teachers' time and energy. In addition, the procedures
are easily learned by college instructors who may wish to incorporate
them into their methods courses; only about 18 hours of instruction
are needed for tutors, and very little more is needed for tutor-trainers.