



A Cultural Enrichment Project Pays Off

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TRADITIONALLY, America has been considered a land of freedom. Nevertheless, one can easily observe that a large segment of the American population has been economically, educationally, and culturally deprived, with little or no opportunity for exposure to experiences which would enrich life. Some school people, genuinely concerned about the achievement of their students, have come to believe that experimentation may be a vehicle for discovering ways or means of motivating culturally deprived pupils.

Some educators believe that a penetrating look should be taken at our present level of achievement so that a program might be formulated that would give greater motivation to the disadvantaged and the deprived child. It has even been suggested that more exposure to the American mainstream or white world, to non-graded classes, and administrative imagination might be helpful in the motivation of the deprived.

After two years of exploratory study, educators in one school system decided to set up an experiment with volunteer students. The purpose of the experiment was to determine whether academic achievement could be improved when these students were exposed to a variety of cultural experiences scheduled to take place before and after regular school hours. The opportunities for experiences were designed to introduce the students to unfamiliar cultural, technological, and scientific areas.

The Problem

The specific problems of the study, then, sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the present opportunities for cultural experiences offered by the school?

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2. What are some of the out-of-school activities and experiences that can be offered by the school which might enhance cultural growth and increase academic achievement?
3. To what extent will exposure to cultural experiences increase the IQ score?
4. Do extra-class experiences, such as visits to industry and planned occupational information, affect occupational choices?

How This Study Differs

This study differs from similar studies which did not indicate that attention had been directed toward the Negro pupil in a completely segregated school in the South; where Negro children were deprived of cultural opportunities sometimes by tradition, sometimes by custom, and sometimes by law.

Thus, the present point of departure from any literature presented on the cultural deprivation of Negro pupils is the emphasis the present investigation will place on efforts designed to overcome the cultural deficiencies due largely to the segregation system.

The investigation also was an attempt to determine what can be done to enhance cultural growth within the framework of the present school facilities without a financial grant, since most schools will hardly receive extra financial assistance from any source.

Further, the investigation was an attempt to determine the extent of parental cooperation with school efforts that make extra-school experiences available to their children, even though there is an added expenditure of time and money.

Procedure

For the purposes of this experiment the high ninth grade was divided into two groups: (a) a comparison group and (b) an experimental group. One half of the high ninth grade students were used as a comparison unit. They were not permitted to attend or participate in any of the planned activities of the experimental group.

The second half of the high ninth grade students were used as an experimental group. One hundred and fifty pupils pledged themselves to participate in the project, 100 as full participants, and 50 as alternates.

Attendance

One of the hypotheses of this investigation was that interesting out-of-school experiences possessed holding power that might be exerted on the participants to the extent that they would be influenced to remain in school for a longer period of time. It is important to remember that an invitation was extended to 150 students to participate in the experimental project, 100 as full participants and 50 as alternates.

The records indicate that 86 percent of the pupils remained in school as well as a part of the experimental project, while only 14 percent were replaced. On the other hand, 74 percent of the comparison group remained in school and 26 percent dropped out and had to be replaced

with alternates. Thus, it appears that the participation in interesting extra-class activities and extra effort by the teacher can supplement the holding power of the school and decrease the drop-out rate.

Academic Grades and Honors

It was found that academic achievements appeared to have increased due to out-of-school activities and experiences. At the completion of the study, 16 of the pupils participating in the program gained membership in the National Honor Society, and 41 were consistently on the schools' honor roll. In order to get on the honor roll a pupil must make all A's or a minimum of 4 A's and 2 B's, with E in conduct in each subject.

According to the record only six students made an average of D; 35 a grade average of C; 33 a grade average of B; and 26 a grade average of A. The registrar's records also indicate that over a three and one-half year period the academic grades of the experimental group were much better than those of the comparison group.

Increasing the IQ Score

Since IQ tests are essentially cultural tests, it then appears that such exposure might change the IQ of the project students. Mayer, in his book *The School*, observes that:

A child's environment—the toys he has had, the challenges he has met—will certainly influence his score on any test. Nobody can separate a child's intelligence from his experience, his "thinking ability" from the information available to him when he thinks. . . . All intelligence tests then are measuring a child's past opportunity for learning as well as his inherited gift for learning.¹

Davis claims that:

. . . all responses to all items in all tests of general intelligence are inevitably influenced by the culture of the respondent.²

This experiment proposed to test this hypothesis by exposing the youngsters to a wide variety of cultural experiences that are not generally available in the classroom.

According to the data, the average IQ of the experimental group increased to 100.5, an increase of 7.6 for the two-year period. According to the results of the second test, the comparison group showed a gain of 3.0, thus, raising the group average to 92.4, during the same period. The slight increase in IQ average by the experimental group over the comparison group can probably be attributed to the extra-class experiences.

Occupational Aspirations

This phase of the study was an attempt to answer the question: "To what extent do extra-class experiences, such as visits to industry and

¹ Martin Mayer. *The School*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961. In: "What IQ Tests Do Not Tell." *Science Digest*, December 1961. p. 14.

² Allison Davis, Kenneth Eells, Robert J. Havighurst, Virgil E. Herrick, and Ralph Tyler. *Intelligence and Cultural Differences*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951. p. 25.

planned occupational information, affect occupational choice?" A questionnaire was submitted to the students of both groups when the experiment began, in order to determine their occupational choices at that time. A second questionnaire was submitted to the experimental group after the pupils had been exposed to much occupational information through lectures and to new occupational opportunities through visits to industry.

The data of the first questionnaire indicated that the youngsters were leaning toward those occupational areas which Negroes traditionally enter. The second questionnaire indicated that the experimental group showed a drastic change after business and industrial visitations and lectures on occupational opportunities.

Off-Campus Activities

These volunteer students have been given an introduction to the arts. They have attended the opera, the symphony, and the ballet. They have been taken to see the collegiate world on campuses both inside the city and out. These young people have been taken to eat in restaurants which normally they could not afford and from which they were formerly barred.

The off-campus activities made the participants conscious of their personal appearance, their conduct, and social graces. It is significant that prior to this experiment these youngsters, who would have snickered, if not laughed, while watching a woman dance in leotards, today show appreciation for the ballet and other forms of art.

College Entrance

Three years after the young people volunteered to participate in the project, they graduated from high school. One of the by-products of the project was to determine the extent to which the students might be motivated to continue their education beyond secondary school.

According to the record, 29 percent of the project participants and 17 percent of the comparison group enrolled in college the following September. It appears that college campus visitations may have been a contributing factor in motivating a larger percentage of the experimental group to enter college.

Emerging from the data are the following conclusions:

1. The usual out-of-school activities of the schools are too meager and too limited
2. More could be done to motivate deprived pupils, through planned out-of-school cultural enrichment activities, within the framework of the present curriculum
3. Cultural enrichment experiences can help disadvantaged pupils not only to want to remain in school, but also to improve their attendance
4. There are many community resources that can be used to supplement classroom activities, with great profit to the child, at relatively little cost
5. The pupil's capacity to achieve should not be "pegged" by an IQ score, as is so often done
6. According to the data, the IQ of pupils can be increased through extra effort on the part of teachers and through planned extra-class experiences.

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