



5. Illustrative Descriptions of Two Early Childhood Education Programs

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IN THE course of developing guidelines for characterizing/describing early childhood education programs, the ASCD Early Childhood Education Council decided to present thumbnail summaries of two programs to illustrate their use. The primary distinguishing feature of the guidelines presented in this issue is their dependence on the user's understanding of alternative views of learning and development.

Four such views have been sketched by Milly Cowles in a previous article, and we suggest (a) that at least three of these views can be arranged on a continuum (see Figure 1) from a strict behaviorist psychology to an extreme maturational view; and (b) that our understanding of various programs can be enhanced by locating each one at an appropriate point along this continuum. These positions are, of course, theoretical. No existing program in operation subscribes fully or unequivocally to the most extreme points on such a continuum, nor is it possible to locate most programs cleanly at just one point.

However, both the stated and implied theoretical positions of any program tend to place it at least within a certain band in relationship to other programs. As an illustration of one way in which the Guidelines may be used as more than a checklist of unrelated items, we have selected two programs which seem to us to belong at clearly identifiable positions on the continuum. In Figure 1 we present both the continuum of

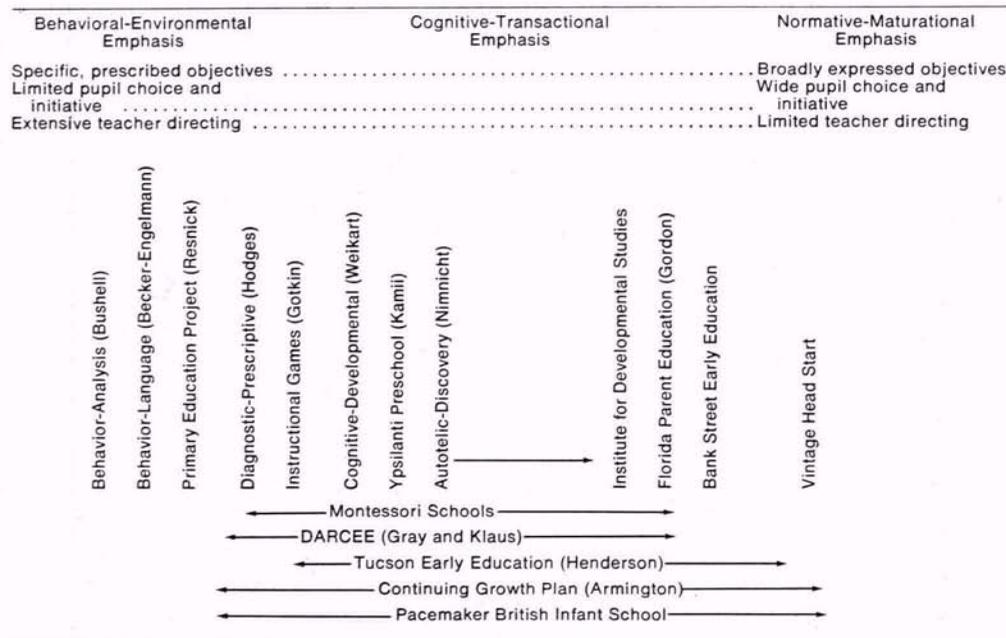
views and the consensus of the Council as to where a number of current programs fit on that continuum. In the two sections that follow, two Head Start programs judged to be at opposite ends of the continuum, the Bushell Planned Variation model and the more "traditional" program, are briefly described. The reader will want to fill in the middle, perhaps using items in the bibliography to get started.

Vintage Head Start

Generally representative of the normative-maturation approach is Project Head Start. As conceived, this project had as its major objective the quick delivery of comprehensive services to masses of young children and their families in a child development center under the umbrella of a community action program. Under its original sponsorship, by the Office of Economic Opportunity, a specific set of guidelines¹ was published to provide a framework upon which to build local programs. The aim was to make maximum impact on all areas of "disadvantage," with the child as cen-

¹ The "Rainbow Series" of booklets issued under the general title *Project Head Start*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Economic Opportunity. (n.d.)

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Placement of programs on the above continuum was made on the basis of information regarding (a) their stated views of learning, (b) the degree of pupil initiative and choice of activities, and (c) the amount of teacher direction of pupil activities required. The placements are approximate and intended to be illustrative rather than definitive.

Figure 1. Early Childhood Programs and Views of Learning

tral focus. Recently, Head Start has been shifted to the Office of Child Development which, among other things, has initiated a number of alternative models under the general category of Planned Variation.²

Aims and Objectives

Child development center curriculum is informally set, non-prescriptive, locally determined by what seems most natural for the particular child population. The development of a positive self-image through inter- and intra-personal relationships in a variety of integrated activities seems to be the single most universal product goal. The process

goal of involvement of parents in all areas of program from proposal to policy decisions is considered critical, indicating an underlying "adult curriculum." Other objectives for children include learning to work and play independently; to live effectively with other children; to realize many opportunities to achieve, to sharpen, and to widen language skills; and to grow in ability to express inner, creative impulses and to channel inner, destructive impulses.

Program Components

Program components, described by ten pamphlets, the "Rainbow Series," stress an interdisciplinary team approach, including Health, Nutrition, Social Services, Parent Participation, and Education. Recently a strong emphasis on cognitive orientation and

² ERIC ECE Clearinghouse. "Head Start Curriculum Models: A Reference List." (805 West Pennsylvania Ave., Urbana, Illinois, Nov. 1970. PS 004 192.)

pupil differentiation has been introduced nationally through Planned Variation. However, in most Head Start programs, structure, scope, and process are as per local design as determined by staff and/or parents. Many programs focus on exploration, self-selection, and discovery in an unstructured environment. Often the curriculum is built from exhibited interests of children in their natural environment.

Basically, the original Head Start program is not different from many traditional nursery school programs except for the socioeconomic status of the children (and parents) involved. It will be recalled that these familiar nursery school programs often required parent participation and focused primarily on group experiences (adjustment, social skills, working out interpersonal relationships) and creative expression through a variety of media. Specific instruction was confined primarily to motor skills. Head Start adds elements specifically intended to meet the special needs of the children of poverty—the health, nutrition, and social services. Unlike most earlier nursery schools, Head Start also aims to prepare children for kindergarten and the primary grades.

The time span of Head Start programs varies from six weeks to twelve months, from three hours per day to full day. Therefore, programs are short term in design. Goals are global, locally defined.

Evaluation

Head Start underwent a national evaluation and eventually published the results. These studies utilized pre-and-post instruments for children as well as attitudinal scales for adults. Little provision was made for feedback at the local level for individual program improvement. Although local evaluation design must be included in a proposal when submitted for annual refunding, there was wide variation in the kinds of designs that were accepted. Standardized instruments (for example, PPVT, IQ tests) were most frequently used. More recently, sponsors have created their own tools to try to

assess definitively which specific program objectives have been attained, to monitor and redesign programs, and to use this information as a tool for customizing the program for children and/or the in-service training for staff.

Staff Development

Head Start guidelines provide for a variety of approaches to staff development in any component area. A national, regional, and state network provides a structure which includes specialized consultants, regional training officers, training programs (contracted and/or university based), and special publications available to local programs on demand. Particular emphasis is placed on training of paraprofessionals, parents, and volunteers. Earmarked funds may be used to provide career ladders to upgrade staff positions, always allowing for community involvement and local determination. The training design depends upon needs as defined by staff, parent advisory group, and/or regional funding source.

Behavior Modification

The Behavior Analysis Program developed in the Department of Human Development at the University of Kansas under the direction of Donald Bushell, Jr., is most clearly identified with the behavior modification end of the continuum. This model is one of those sponsored by the Office of Child Development under Head Start Planned Variation. If we follow the Guidelines in order and refer to published descriptions of the program, a composite picture of the program emerges similar to the following.

Aims and Objectives

The program attempts to achieve most goals included in the Guidelines on a short-term basis through particularized behavioral engineering. Efficient systematic reinforcement of specific, identifiable, desired behaviors is sought. All other behaviors are to be ignored. A complete range of goals is set



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paper. *Educational Testing Service, Princeton*;
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up. However, the specification of daily lessons in terms of specific learnings in special areas tends toward a restrictive narrowing of goals to aspects of classroom department and specific academic competencies in mathematics, reading, and language. By comparison, the Becker-Engelmann program emphasizes the logic of language as the basis for a whole range of specific competencies which are taught through a predetermined schedule of pattern practice and reinforcement. Each goal is viewed as theoretically related to others, but in practice each is separately taught.

The developers of the program anticipate immediate achievement of specific goals by each child in turn. There is no differentiation of objectives among children or goals.

The goals are stated explicitly in terms of operational definitions and pupil performance criteria. While the program is highly structured along predetermined lines coinciding with the structure of learning or the specific subject, the sequence is supposed to be tailored to individual needs.

Program Components

Except in those cases where the child is dealing with programmed materials, the forward movement of the program and activity determination are the responsibility of the teacher or other adult. Likewise, the initiative for selection of activities, time, place, and manner of involvement resides with the teacher unless the child earns the right to buy decision-making power. Although desirable social behavior is reinforced as it occurs in the course of each day, the Primary Education Project (PEP) component emphasizes predetermined sequential pursuit of academic skills. In the Bushell program, reinforcement is given to children in the form of tokens which they can save up and "cash in" for various kinds of privileges.

The program is located primarily in the classroom and school environs. A wide range of activities is available to the teacher for use with the children. Within those programs with a behaviorist orientation, a wide

range of activities and materials is prescribed with variation from program to program, changing in terms of the child's identified lacks vis-à-vis program objectives. The learning tasks are broadly focused, with simplified separable lessons having rigorously defined learning tasks.

Very little differentiation in basic activities is possible. The same activities for all children or similar activities selected from a sequence of activities are followed for nearly all students. Becker-Engelmann and PEP permit the least differentiation except in pacing. When permitted, teacher choice predominates over student choice of route to follow or activities to pursue.

Evaluation

Student status and progress are assessed on a continuous basis, with emphasis on behavior assessment. The Bushell program stresses assessment which is both informal, in terms of dependence on teacher judgments as opposed to standardized tests, and systematic, in that it is continual on the basis of predetermined criterion measures. PEP structures each activity on the basis of results of performance on evaluation of the preceding activity. (By comparison, DARCEE provides extensive systematic standardized testing for language ability and IQ.) In general, there is little or no student self-evaluation. An adult, usually the teacher, or the program itself provides feedback.

The Hodges and DARCEE programs are examples of exceptions which use outside evaluators, psychologists, or other specialists to do the testing. The full range of objectives identified by the program is evaluated. The results of the evaluation tend to be used primarily for instructional purposes rather than program redevelopment or modification. Hodges, by contrast, became involved in continuous program reconstruction.

Staff Development

The behavioral group places emphasis on translation of human development and learning research findings directly into

teaching strategies and teacher roles. Development of positive teacher attitudes toward reinforcement, with specific techniques for methods and approaches to teaching in knowledge areas, is a primary ingredient. The teacher and other adults working with the child must learn to ignore unwanted behaviors and reinforce positive behaviors. In addition, staff preparation emphasizes learning to make the program strategies work.

Training sessions for staff parallel behavior reinforcement for children. While Hodges includes all methods suggested in the Guidelines, the Bushell program seems to emphasize the preservice training sessions.

On the other hand, Hodges' approach calls for continuous staff development. Beyond evaluation of the children and prescription of materials, the staff is not heavily involved in planning and policy making or development or revision of the program. Hodges' program places the largest responsibility on teachers for continuing involvement in all aspects of the program. As noted above, the programs for preparation of staff tend to parallel the type of program designed for the students. The Bushell training of staff is restricted to specifics of using the program. Hodges' expectation that teachers participate in continuing program development and planning demands a more open training format.

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* General overview.

Note: "PS" numbers refer to documents in the ERIC Clearinghouse on Early Childhood Education. For information, write to 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana, Illinois 61801. "ED" numbers refer to *Research in Education* (RIE) indices available in most libraries. □

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