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ABSTRACT

Project Head Start and Project Follow Through are jointly exploring the effectiveness of 12 different educational approaches, or models, for the education of young children from poverty families. Investigations include study of (1) the effect of a continuous intervention program which begins with Head Start and extends through third grade, (2) the initial impact and lasting effect of various approaches during this period of time, and (3) the most effective age for pupil entrance. Planned Variation program sponsors and short program descriptions are listed. Program approaches represented include structured academic, cognitively-oriented, developmental self-directed, pragmatic action-oriented, responsive environment, and parent educator. The enabling model is also discussed. Criteria are given for the selection of the 30 communities in the 1970-71 study, which include 15 of the 1969-70 sites. The overall design and plans for measurement, assessment, and analysis are presented. (NH)

HEAD START PLANNED VARIATION STUDY

SEPTEMBER 1970

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
Office of Child Development
Project Head Start
Washington, D.C. 20201

HEAD START PLANNED VARIATION STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Project Head Start was organized for the purpose of increasing opportunities for children of the poor by providing an environment in which each child has the opportunity to develop his full potential. As a comprehensive program, it offers preschool youngsters from poverty families a variety of services necessary to their total development.

It is generally agreed that early childhood education has definite value and that early intervention in the child's life is an effective means by which to lessen or eradicate later psychological, sociological and educational problems. There is lack of agreement, however, as to which methods are best suited for successful preschool intervention. For this reason, an experimental program has been initiated. During the last few years, a variety of curricula have been developed. Some of these curricular approaches are rather general; others are very specific. Some are based on similar principles, but others are quite divergent in basic philosophy; however, all are attempting to find educational strategies best suited to a preschool program for children from low-income families. We are now attempting to evaluate several of these curricula on both a short and long term basis in order to obtain information about their relative effectiveness. This project, called PLANNED VARIATION, is an experimental program; it does not imply endorsement by Head Start of any of the models at this time.

Project Follow-Through is presently involved in exploring the relative effectiveness of different approaches (models) to the education of young children from poverty families in elementary school. Project Head Start, in its experimental program, is currently implementing ten of these approaches, and two other approaches geared to the preschool child (ages 3 to 5). Working in cooperation with Follow-Through, this experimental project will serve several functions by investigating:

1. The impact of various well-defined educational environments and learning situations on the Head Start child,

2. The effect of a continuous intervention program which begins with Head Start and extends through third grade, and the initial impact of various approaches during this period of time,

3. The lasting effect of specific program approaches. For instance, we will be able to find out if the rapid rate of development experienced in Head Start can be maintained with all approaches, some approaches, or none at all.

4. Information about facilitating periods for intervention. Is one particular approach most effective or are all programs more effective if started at age 4, 5 or 6?

Evaluation of the project is being conducted this year by Stanford Research Institute, which is also responsible for Follow-Through evaluation. Carried out over several years, the Planned Variation program will provide a carefully delineated study of a variety of approaches to the early education of poor children.

PROGRAM OPERATION 1970-71

During the 1969-70 school year, the Planned Variation experimental program was operated as a small pilot project. In 1970-71, there has been a moderate expansion in approaches and in sites. In view of the fact that the program is an innovative one, an effort has been made to limit program size and to maintain careful control in order to ensure high quality and maximum flexibility.

Before selection for participation in the 1969-70 Planned Variation Program, sponsors were required to be operating an ongoing Follow-Through model, to have a curricular approach defined for preschool children, to express a willingness to work within the framework of Head Start, and to state a commitment to the overall research effort. The selection of eight Planned Variation sponsors was made by the Head Start National Office in consultation with the National Office of Follow-Through. In 1970-71, two of the new sponsors are also in Follow-Through; two are not.

Following selection of sponsors, the 16 (1969-70) Planned Variation communities (two per sponsor) were chosen. Only communities with Head Start programs where children fed into an ongoing Follow-Through model were eligible for consideration. The National Head Start staff, sponsors, and regional Head Start staff made preliminary selection of communities. The final decision to participate in Planned Variation was made by the local Parent Advisory Council, CAA, and Head Start staff. Comparison groups were also located within the Planned Variation community in 11 cases; in five instances, where there were not enough Head Start children at the Planned Variation site to make up comparison groups, comparison groups were situated in nearby communities. The 30 communities in the 1970-71 study include 15 of the 1969-70 sites; new sites generally were selected in the same manner as the previous year.

The twelve Planned Variation approaches now being implemented are described below:

Don Bushell - University of Kansas

Sites: Portageville, Missouri
Oraibi, Arizona
Mounds, Illinois

Don Bushell uses a behavior analysis approach. The goal of the program is to teach the child needed skills by means of systematic reinforcement procedures. The teacher's role is that of a behavior modifier. Individual instruction is emphasized through the use of programmed materials. Parents are hired and trained to use positive reinforcement techniques while teaching in the classroom; they also share responsibility for teaching these techniques to other parents.

Becker and Englemann - University of Oregon

Sites: East St. Louis, Illinois
Tupelo, Mississippi
East Las Vegas, New Mexico

Becker and Englemann use a structured, academic approach. The program is premised on the belief that every child can achieve well in the academic area if he receives adequate instruction and if there is a pay-off for learning. Programmed materials are used to teach essential concepts and operations in reading, arithmetic, and language. A language training program is specifically designed to remedy language deficiency, teach language necessary for instruction and concepts used for logical thinking. Teachers systematically reinforce those behaviors that are desired. Parents are trained as teacher aides in the use of programmed materials and specific reinforcement techniques.

Elizabeth Gilkeson - Bank Street College

Sites: Wilmington, Delaware
Tuskegee, Alabama
Boulder, Colorado
Elmira, New York

Bank Street College presents a developmental approach which has as its ultimate objective enabling each child to become deeply involved and self-directed in his learning. Activities are planned for both individuals and groups of children. The classroom is the child's work room where he is free to investigate objects and explore media. Concrete, sensory, and motor activities are interrelated with opportunities for functional and expressive use of language. The teacher is regarded as highly important in the program. She not only functions as a consistent adult whom the child learns to trust, but she also sensitizes the youngster to his experiences, to sights, sounds, feelings and ideas. Key elements in the program are: (1) staff development (2) parent involvement and (3) community relations.

Ronald Henderson - University of Arizona

Sites: Walker County, Georgia
Lakewood, New Jersey
Lincoln, Nebraska

This program emphasizes the development of behavioral skills and attitudes, categorized as: a language competence, an intellectual base, a motivational base and societal arts and skills. While carefully structured, the curriculum is flexible and the organization of the class provides for frequent opportunities for small group and one-to-one adult-child interaction. A variety of behavioral options are made available to the child, providing opportunities to develop individual skills at individual rates. Imitation of a variety of desirable behavioral models provided is actively encouraged. Social reinforcement is used to ensure that the child experiences frequent gratification as a result of his behavior and skill acquisition. The assumptions are made that when opportunities for learning are made available (1) the child does not have to be forced or even to be requested to learn, and (2) that the optimal functioning of the instructional program is very dependent upon an effective parent involvement program.

David Weikart - Ypsilanti, Michigan

Sites: Central Ozarks, Missouri
Okaloosa, Florida
Greeley, Colorado
Seattle, Washington

David Weikart present a cognitive-oriented preschool program derived from the theories of Piaget. The program has three main foci - the curriculum which is cognitively oriented; the teacher who participated actively in developing class programs; the home, where the teacher works with the mother to promote cognitive growth in the child. Learning objectives are stated as behavioral goals which describe the behavior expected as a result of the learning activity. The child's level of performance must be determined so materials can be presented in a sequential fashion from the simple to the complex and from the concrete to the abstract. Language training and development of the self-concept are vital parts of the program.

Ira Gordon - University of Florida

Sites: Chattanooga, Tennessee
Jacksonville, Florida
Jonesboro, Arkansas
Houston, Texas

Gordon uses an approach which utilizes the concept of the parent-educator. The parent-educator is a mother from the local community who works with each parent in the home by presenting weekly tasks, individualized for her

child, for development of intellectual and cognitive skills; the parent-educator also assists in the classroom. The tasks that are taught in the classroom are then taken by her into the home, where she instructs the mother in how to teach the child. The mother thus learns (1) that education occurs in the home, (2) what kinds of children activities she should encourage, and (3) that her behavior with her child can have an effect and that she can be successful. Gordon suggests that findings made during home visits and classroom observations should be the basis of curriculum development tailored to each community.

Glen Nimnicht - Far West Lab for Educational Research and Development

Sites: Duluth, Minnesota
Buffalo, New York
Fresno, California
Salt Lake City, Utah
Tacoma, Washington

Nimnicht has developed a responsive environment program based on the autotelic discovery approach. The program aims to help children develop both positive self-image and intellectual ability. Emphasis is placed on increasing the child's sensory and perceptual acuity, language development and concept formation, problem solving and abstract thinking ability.

The autotelic learning activities are intended to be intrinsically motivating and self-rewarding - not dependent on external rewards or punishments. The total environment is organized to be responsive to the child's interest and his style of learning. The teacher is also responsive to the child. She guides him, helps him solve problems and find answers, but avoids providing him with solutions.

Frank Watson - Education Development Center

Sites: Washington, D.C.
Johnson City, North Carolina
Paterson, New Jersey

EDC uses a pragmatic and action-oriented approach. The objectives are: (1) to help Head Start fashion classroom environments responsive to the individual needs of children, as well as to the talents and styles of the teachers, and (2) to develop the advisory concept as a way of facilitating continued growth and change in schools. Basic requirements are that there must be an effective program of staff development; adequately provisioned environments in which children can be challenged and stimulated, and a continuing program of parental involvement and interpretation. The class activities arise from the needs and interest of the group rather than from a prescribed curriculum. The teacher serves as a catalytic agent. She guides the children and structures the environment. A local advisor, with extensive teaching experience, is charged with responsibility for suggesting change as indicated within each classroom.

Ruth Farmer, Program Implementor - Responsive Environment Corporation

Site: Kansas City, Missouri

The REC program utilizes specially designed learning materials and educational technology in a flexible structure to achieve its objectives. There is a careful balance between structured and non-structured activities with emphasis on individualized independent work rather than group instruction. Observations of the child's interaction with his environment guide the teacher in the selection and organization of appropriate materials and activities. The talking page learning system is used for language growth and development. Selected self-correcting sensorial learning materials are provided to aid the child in understanding and incorporating basic concepts and to enhance his abstract reasoning ability. Classroom libraries containing a large number of volumes on a wide variety of subjects are an integral part of the model. A home learning unit comprised of sequential learning materials and a learning activity guide for use by parents and other family members is used.

Edward Ponder, Program Implementor - Institute of Developmental Studies

Sites: Virgin Islands, St. Thomas

This program is designed to focus on both the cognitive and affective development of young children. Areas of implementation are concept formation, perception, language, self-image, and social emotional growth. Emphasis is placed on individualization of instruction by means of classroom management techniques, continuous teacher assessment, and small group instruction. An integral part of the program is ongoing involvement of classroom personnel in the construction and adaptation of curriculum and materials. Community and parent participation is a viable component of this approach.

Warren Sheppler, Program Implementor - University of Pittsburgh

Site: Lock Haven, Pennsylvania

The Learning Research and Development Center of the University of Pittsburgh has developed the PEP (Primary Education Project) model for individualized education at the preschool level. The most critical component lies in an individual progress plan in which each child works through the finely graded steps of a curriculum at a rate and in a manner suited to his own needs. The curriculum emphasizes basic skills and concepts that underlie

a variety of subject matters, including basic perceptual motor orientation, language concepts and logical processes, memory and problem solving skills. The curriculum objectives are sequenced to reflect the natural order in which children acquire key skills and concepts. For each objective in the sequence, a brief diagnostic test has been developed. A teacher uses these tests to determine where in each sequence each child falls and designs an individually tailored instructional program for him.

The Enabling Model

To assure the adequacy of Head Start components not involved with the model and to provide the National and regional offices with information about program operations, an early childhood education specialist has been assigned as a VOLT consultant to each community participating in the experimental program. These consultants work closely with local Head Start staff to expedite the successful integration of the experimental curriculum with ongoing Head Start operations; in this manner, the integrity of the regular Head Start program in Planned Variation communities is ensured. In addition, consultation with program sponsors and local staff members, coupled with monthly observation of classroom activity, enable the specialists to chart accurately the progress being made in the implementation of experimental curricular models within Head Start classrooms. Their descriptions of the implementation process, compiled into year-end summaries of activity within each Planned Variation community were made available to SRI for inclusion in its final report on the total experimental program. This information is instrumental in furthering our ability to isolate those factors which either contribute to or impede the implementation of experimental curricula within preschools for disadvantaged children.

In 1970-71, the possible impact of these expert consultants has been developed into a model in its own right. The enabling modeller's role is to provide on-going technical assistance to the community and the Head Start staff in formulating their objectives for the coming year and in selecting the best ways of reaching these objectives. The enabling modellers are keeping detailed records of their activities and of the progress of their efforts so that what they are developing this year could be replicated by other consultants in other sites.

Despite some initial problems, we are encouraged with the progress which communities have made in implementing experimental models within Head Start settings. In most cases, community personnel have made every effort to cooperate fully with the research project and, at the same time, have ensured that regular Head Start operations remain intact. We consider 1969-70 a successful pilot year and are now looking forward to moving Planned Variation into a larger operation in 1970-71.

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Planned Variation
August 11, 1970

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OVERALL DESIGN

The Planned Variation evaluation design compares the development of children and their families participating in the sponsor's programs with that of children and their families attending regular Head Start programs in the same community or in a similar community. The children are observed early in their Head Start experience, at the end of the Head Start year, and at the end of their first, second, and third years of school, with periodic follow-up in later grades. Most of the children attending sponsored Head Start programs are expected to continue in the same sponsors' Follow Through classes. Most of the children attending regular Head Start programs are expected to attend regular primary classes in schools without Follow Through programs. There will be sizeable samples, however, of children attending (a) sponsored Head Start and regular public school or (b) regular Head Start and sponsored Follow Through classes.

The evaluation will place approximately equal emphasis on implementation of the sponsors' program ("What does it take to get the program running well?") and on the children's affective and cognitive development ("When the program is running well, does it continue to have the success promised by laboratory-scale reports?"). Three separate waves (1969-70, 1970-71 and 1971-72) will be studied in the same communities. With regard to both program and evaluation, 1969-70 was a pilot year and at least two more years are needed for a stable assessment of the different approaches. Conclusions about immediate effects of the programs should be available about 1973; conclusions regarding intermediate range effectiveness should be available in January 1976, when the third wave will have completed the second grade. Preliminary findings and reports will be prepared throughout the project, but these must be interpreted with great caution until the third wave has been completely studied.

Timing and Relative Emphasis: The Planned Variation experimental program is considered as a three wave effort, each wave to be followed through Head Start and Follow Through to the "regular" school years. During the first program year, the primary emphasis was investigating what it takes to get a program well implemented in the field. A second emphasis was obtaining baseline data in the communities with enough pre and post measurement so that in classes where the program was well implemented, first analyses of program effects were possible. During the second program year, the study of implementation will continue but more effort will be put into documenting process variables in the classroom to describe for a larger sample of programs what is happening in the "regular" Head Starts and in the different models. Child/family measures will be collected and, on the basis of the FY'70 effort, expanded where possible. For example, preliminary observations

in FY'70 suggest that the children's awareness of "success" and "failure", and their concept of Head Start as "work-time, study, task oriented" or "diverse, creative, playful" may be relevant to different models. Measures of these variables will be incorporated in the FY'71 battery as far as possible. During the third program year, a "summative" evaluation will be undertaken, including cost/benefits comparisons among the different approaches and incorporating previously developed measures of implementation, process, and "developmental" variables for the staff, the children, and their families.

Measures for the FY'71 Planned Variation Experimental Program. The evaluation approach for Planned Variation in 1970-71 is based on two assumptions: (A) that an important goal for the second year would be successful implementation of sponsor programs, and (B) that measurement should be sponsor-specific in the sense of reflecting the objectives of the eleven sponsors rather than a wide-scope assessment. The following information reflects plans as of July 1970; these may be altered somewhat.

(A) Assessment of Implementation: An important accomplishment for 1970-71 is successful teacher training and simply getting the sponsors' programs into Head Start. One of the things we should be learning from this year is how to make the lab/field transition as swiftly, effectively and smoothly as possible. A primary task for evaluation is to assess objectively the extent to which Planned Variations have been successfully implemented by the sponsors, and whether important elements of each variation may be present in other sponsor's classes and in comparison classes.

Five different approaches to evaluating implementation have been developed: teacher questionnaires, classroom observations, teacher ratings, interviews with sponsors, and consultant reports. The material from these five approaches will be collated on a community-by-community basis and generalizations from across communities as similarities permit. A brief description of the measures follows:

Teacher Questionnaire (Post only): This is a criterion measure, with items suggested by the sponsors. The items indicate practices, attitudes and beliefs sponsors anticipate would change as a result of their program for the experimental, but not the comparison teachers. The measure is also being used as an index, from the teacher's point of view, of both implementation and diffusion of sponsored Head Start.

Classroom observations on all Planned Variation comparison classes in 30 communities (at least one for each sponsor). The instrument was developed from items prepared in cooperation with the joint fellows; it has been field-tested and revised to provide a reliable (when used by paraprofessionals) indicator of sponsor-relevant activities. The instrument should permit analyses of within and between sponsor similarities and differences, as well as comparisons with "regular" Head Start classes. Primarily, however, the instrument is intended to permit comparison of child and family development data for three groups:

1) classes which are exemplars of sponsor A in which sponsor A was directly involved;

2) classes which are "naturally occurring" exemplars of sponsor A, in which sponsor A was not directly involved; and

3) classes in which there are none or few elements of sponsor A's program, including classes where sponsor A attempted, but failed to develop his approach and classes where no attempt was made to implement his model.

Other implementation data including:

- Teacher ratings of proficiency and progress by sponsors and Head Start directors for all teachers
- Structured implementation interviews with sponsors.
- Head Start consultant reports on implementation based on the monthly visits by the consultants to each community.
- Teacher reports in the teacher questionnaire.

(B) Assessment of Program Effects: The following considerations guided selection of effects measures in FY'71.

1) The criterion measures should reflect sponsors' objectives for the children, their families, and the teachers. The core measures should provide both cognitive and affective data, and data on maternal behavior as a teacher.

2) Since the study is longitudinal, at least one measure should be suitable for children from 3 through 9 years of age as an anchor across the Head Start, Follow-Through and follow-up periods.

3) Since there are relatively few measures on which much variation can be observed when the children enter Head Start, and attrition was expected to range between five percent and 15 percent, the strategy is to have a sparse initial measurement.

Four different approaches to evaluating program effects were developed: child performance measures, pre and post; collection of child/family demographic and attendance data; family interviews focusing on attitudinal data; and case histories. A brief description of the measures as currently planned follows:

(1) Child performance data

a. Pre - All children in planned variation and comparison classes in 30 communities:

1) 1968 experimental revision (64 items) of the Caldwell Preschool Inventory

2) Draw-a- Line Slowly task

3) Walk-the-Board Slowly task

4) Wind-the-Line Slowly task

5) New York University pre-academic skills test: sensory discrimination

6) New York University pre-academic skills test: alpha and numeric recognition

7) Experimental ethnic knowledge test

8) Teacher ratings of child behavior

b. Pre - Fifty percent of children in each planned variation and comparison class in 19 communities

1) Stanford-Binet, long form

2) Hertzig-Birch response style scoring of Stanford-Binet (coping, affective behavior rating)

c. Post- Other 50 percent of children in each planned variation and comparison class in these 19 communities - Hess-Shipman mother/child interaction task: Eight-Block Sort with scoring on maternal teaching and reinforcement style and child performance.

d. Post - All of the "pre" measures are being administered "post" to the same children.

(2) Additional Data: Pre and post, demographic and attendance data on the child and his family, including information on previous and current Head Start and Follow-Through experiences.

(3) Additional Data: Family interview (post only for Eight-Block Sort parents only) on child rearing practices, experiences during Head Start, attitudes toward Head Start and education and PAC participation. This is a criterion measure which sponsors expect will be affected by participation in their programs.

(4) Case Histories: Case histories on two planned variation and two comparison children in one community for each sponsor are being developed under the direction of Dr. Laura Dittman and her staff at the University of Maryland. The purpose of this pilot study is three-fold. First, the observations of trained child development specialists should identify the areas which ought to be included in child measures next year wherever the state of the art permits. A second purpose was to obtain richer and more complex information about the child's development in different programs than correlational data provide; that is, to use the report as a part of the total evaluation study in its own right. A third purpose was to explore the feasibility of this approach in the field.

4) Plans for Analyses and Reports

A. Interim report: An interim report analyzing the pre data for Planned Variation and comparison clases should be available in late winter. The primary question to which this report is dirested is - "Are the samples comparable within communities, within sponsors, and across sponsors?" Additional questions of evaluative interest (e.g., comparison of initial performance of younger and older children) will be investigated.

B. Final Report: The final report will include sections on implementation and on changes in the children and their families within each community. Pooling across communities or across sponsors will depend on evidence of initial similarity on relevant variables. Additional questions of importance to program development (e.g., relation of change to age of entry; to previous experience; to child sex; to teacher characteristics) will be investigated. The final report probably will be available in late fall or early winter of 1971. The final report for 1970 should be available in winter 1970.

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