SPECIAL ISSUE: BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION IN EDUCATION

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EDITORIAL

It is now eight years since Skinner spoke in Manchester on "Contingency Management in the Classroom". His paper marked the early stages of the serious discussion of applying behaviour modification to classroom problems in British schools. In the early 1970's, it was very necessary to demonstrate that such technology could be adapted to the British educational system. To some extent, we are beyond that stage—but only just. There have been a few demonstration projects, some of which are represented in this special issue, but the case for training teachers to use behaviour modification techniques in ordinary classrooms has still to be accepted by most teacher training colleges.

The papers in this special issue fall into three sections. In the first, there are five papers which describe studies in which teachers in ordinary classrooms have been taught to use behavioural methods. As can be seen, teachers can use the technology successfully, and this now opens up the way to further empirical studies. The second section contains two papers which address themselves to wide-spread problems—reading difficulties and school

phobia. Both conditions occupy many of the scarce specialist resources in the educational services, and, not surprisingly, behavioural approaches promise to make important contributions in these areas. The final section contains three papers which illustrate how behavioural techniques can be applied in specialised settings outside the mainstream of normal primary and secondary education.

This selection of papers presents an overview of the "state of the art" of behaviour modification in education in Britain at the present time. The indications are that a watershed has been reached. From here onwards, fewer projects will have to convince teachers and education authorities that behavioural approaches have an important role in our education system. Instead, building on those important foundations, future projects will be able to use the full panoply of behavioural analysis to investigate other educationally relevant problems. The next decade should witness an exciting increase in investigations which study what actually goes on in classrooms.

THE TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTION PROJECT BY WILLIAM YULE,[1] MICHAEL BERGER,[2] AND VERONICA WIGLEY[3]

Since 1969, there has been a slow, but steady, increase in the number of studies which have attempted to apply behavioural methods within the British school setting. The variety of papers reported in this volume attest to the wide level of current interest. Many reviewers of American experience (e.g. Sherman and Bushell, 1975; O'Leary and O'Leary, 1972) show that both academic and classroom behaviours have been investigated, and there is a general agreement that the aim of behavioural intervention is not necessarily to make children "be still, be quiet and be good" (Winnett and Winkler, 1972). Rather, the aim is to help the classroom teacher to use the ongoing teacher-child interaction in a deliberate, positive way so as to foster the optimum level of personal development and academic attainment in her pupils. This paper draws on our experiences of the past four years of training groups of teachers in behavioural management, and concentrates on some of the important issues involved in ensuring that behavioural intervention of the highest quality can be offered to teachers in schools.

AN ALTERNATIVE SERVICE-DELIVERY MODEL

The traditional child-guidnace, specialist-service model for helping children with difficulties is increasingly being criticized for failing to meet the needs of the community (Tizard, 1973). In fact, the effectiveness of the system has never been adequately evaluated, despite the enormous resources it utilizes. Recent epidemiological studies (Rutter, et al., 1975; Berger, Yule and Rutter, 1975) have demonstrated that the numbers of school children with recognizable and severe academic and behaviour difficulties are so great that no treatment service wedded exclusively to an individualized treatment delivery model can be expected to cope. Alternative ways of helping ordinary classroom teachers to help children within the normal school setting have to be developed.

Tharp and Wetzel (1969) cogently argued the case for a pyramidal model of service delivery, whereby a consultant psychologist advised a group of specially trained "behaviour analysts" who in turn helped significant adults—parents, teachers and others—to set up therapeutic programmes for children. A closely similar model has been operating for a number of years in Kansas where Vance Hall has trained postgraduate students to run courses for teachers. He calls his approach "Responsive Teaching" (Hall, 1971; Hall and Copeland, 1971). From the steady stream of papers produced by Hall and his colleagues, it is clear that this is one way of effectively helping many teachers.

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