Schools Are Not Only For Learning

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A number of key questions are often posed in relation to children's
educational progress. First: does the home have an impact on the
child's progress and behaviour? Second: does the neighbourhood in
which the child lives have an important effect? Third: does the school
have an impact on the child's educational progress and behaviour?
In other words, does it matter which school the child attends? Fourth:
how important is the child's basic intelligence? In other words, does it
matter if the child is dull? Obviously all these factors impinge on each
other. The last important question is, which of the above are susceptible
to modification?

Credit and Blame

As parents. we are prone to accept credit for our children's successes,
but our self-esteem may feel threatened when problems occur, and we
are then likely to look for outside explanations. We seek to lay the
blame at the feet of society, but more particularly the school or the
neighbourhood — by which we mean other people and other people's
children.

Teachers are also human and they, too, may feel threatened when
problems occur, and often seek explanations beyond themselves. They
focus on 3 main influences: the local neighbourhood, the home and the
child's basic ability. However, many other factors are not always imme-
diately evident to teachers and parents.

Matters are even more complicated because schools and parents see
children rather differently. If you ask parents and teachers about a
child's behaviour, you often get very different accounts; a parent may
be rather concerned about an aspect of child behaviour, but the school
may be unaware of any such difficulties. Alternatively, the school may
find the child disruptive and unmanageable, whereas the parents are
most surprised to hear of this. Most workers suggest there is only a
20% agreement on the amount of disturbed behaviour as perceived
by parents and teachers. On the other hand, if we obtain information
about the child's behaviour from other sources, such as his classmates,
we find a reasonably good correspondence between those children who
are disliked, teased or rejected and those children viewed by teachers
as having problems, although a lack of popularity is not necessarily
synonymous with poor adjustment. Nevertheless, even the important
information about personal distress felt by, and described by, the child
himself, overlaps very little with information from the school or home
(Macmillan *et al.*, 1980). Thus, emotional disturbance based on infor-
mation from the child himself stands on its own and is not a charac-
teristic amenable to identification by other measures. Hence when we
are trying to study problems, we have to gather information from a

wide number of sources and when we are looking at negative influences of the home and school, we have to consider a wide variety of types of behaviour, as follows:

(a) Emotional disturbance based on information derived both from parents and from teachers.
(b) Antisocial behaviour, again based on parent and teacher reports.
(c) Popularity, i.e. how the child is seen by his friends.
(d) Personal sense of distress, as described by the child himself.
(e) Academic progress.
(f) Delinquency, based on information coming directly from the community.

The Suggestion that Schools do not have an Important influence

Schools had good grounds for this belief and these are reviewed by Rutter *et al.* (1979). A number of influential reports have supported such conclusions: Coleman in the U.S.A. (1966) studied 645 000 children in 4 000 schools and from this work concluded that educational progress was independent of the type of schooling the child received. Such conclusions were supported by Jensen in the U.S.A. (1969), who studied intelligence and scholastic progress and concluded that 'compensatory education had failed'. Compensatory education programmes were, in brief, educational enrichment programmes used for underprivileged and disadvantaged children. They provided a progressive type of nursery school programme, usually based on those developed for middle-class children. Furthermore, in England a Government Education Committee in the Plowden Repart (1967) concluded that home influence were far more important than school. All this work took place in the mid and late 1960s.

The first flaw in these conclusions emerged from work in London (Power *et al.*, 1967/1972), which demonstrated that there are so-called 'delinquent' schools, i.e. secondary schools which produce more than their fair share of delinquency than do others, despite the fact that all these children come from the same home backgrounds and the same primary schools, e.g. junior schools in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. Roots of failure, both in behaviour and educational achievements, thus started to be attributed to society (Bernstein, 1970) and family influences (Coleman, 1966) and also school influences. To study the effect of the school, we can assess the frequency with which psychological problems occur in different schools, but this tells us only what problems occur more frequently in some neighbourhoods than in others. We have to discover whether these problems were present before the children went to these schools or whether the problems have been caused by the school itself. We therefore have to find a way of describing the features of the school and also a way of ensuring that the pupils have not altered since they started attending such schools. Alternatively, we must find a way of dealing with any differences between pupils. These are complex matters and beyond the scope of this paper.

As far as differences between schools are concerned, many problems arise in trying to develop ways of measuring the ethos of the school (what we have called school characteristics). There are 2 major questions: do we use an aerial (i.e. a helicopter) or a microscopic (i.e. a

classroom by classroom) approach in studying schools? The aerial approach is based on the assumption that we can study a school as if there were few differences between its component parts, and it was a culture in its own right. It is like studying a whole city, such as Johannesburg, and trying to identify the main features of characteristics of the culture of that city by ignoring the variations that occur from area to area within the city. Some would claim that this is not a valid technique and that the only correct way is to study it from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, i.e. by looking separately at Malvern, Kensington, Fordsburg, Hillbrow, Parktown and so on. This brings us the microscopic approach, which sees each area as different, and the analogy with the school is to see each class as different. Unfortunately, with the microscopic approach we do not have a degree of permanence; teachers change, pupils change and exposure to a particular teacher in a secondary school is not necessarily very long because different teachers teach different subjects. For these and many other reasons, most of us prefer to study the school using an aerial approach, i.e. to study it as a social institution. Our own work, which has focused on schools as institutions (Mullin, 1979) has demonstrated considerable differences between schools (Fig. 1). Other workers have also demonstrated such differences.
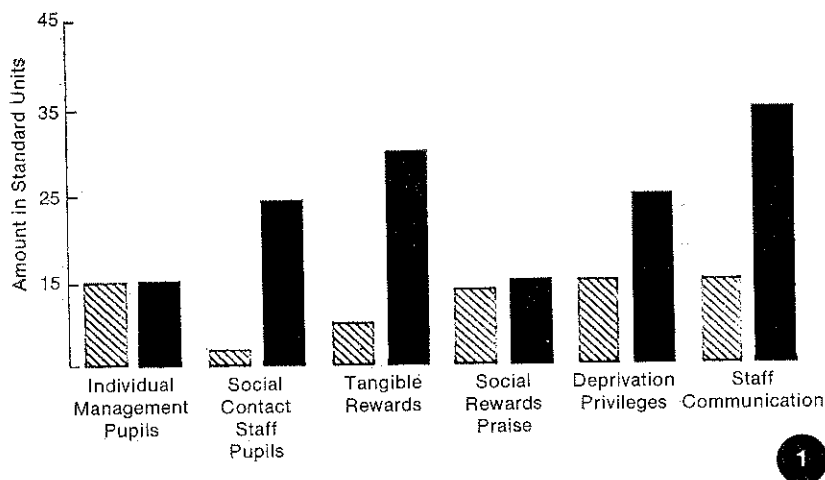

Fig. 1. Schools Characteristic Index: Two Senior Schools.

The question, therefore, is how much do these different schools influence children? Furthermore,

1. Can we identify the features or characteristics of schools which influence children's behaviour?
2. Can we modify schools?
3. Can we modify the children in order to promote successful development.
4. Can we help the children's families?

A major research project in London has addressed itself to the first question and a number of related questions, while the second question

has been explored in Newcastle upon Tyne. We must remember that, depending on the country, a child may spend up to one-third or a half of his working day in schools, with teachers as parent substitutes or 'caretakers'.

The London Research (Fifteen Thousand Hours (Rutter *et al.*, 1979)

Some types of behaviour can be influenced (Table 1) while other factors appear to be beyond the teacher's control (Fig. 2). With regard to behaviour and attainment (Table 3), Rutter and his colleagues found that schools differed considerably in the amount of maladjustment and the academic attainment of the children in their care. However, not all differences were due to the type of child taken into the school. Such differences between schools remained the same over a period of 3 - 4 years. The differences in schools were not due to physical factors, such as the size of the school or administrative organisation, but were due to the influence of schools as social institutions. In other words, we come back to the idea of 'neurotic' and 'delinquent' schools, i.e. schools which appear to give rise to more than their fair share of neurotic or antisocial behaviour in their pupils. Again, we come back to the point that in addition to their well-recognised potential influences of being educative, supportive and controlling, school environments can have behaviourally unsettling influences. The important factors identified by Rutter were:

i. The degree to which the school emphasized academic matters.
ii. How teachers conducted their lesson, i.e. their style of teaching.
iii. The availability of incentives and rewards.
iv. Whether there were good conditions for pupils.
v. Schools where children were allowed to take responsibility.

Table 1: Behaviours that can be Influenced

Academic Attainment
School Attendance
Emotional Disturbance
Delinquency

Table 2: Factors Beyond Teacher Control

1. Percentage of children with average intelligence.
2. Neighbourhood factors.

Table 3: School Influences — Behaviour and Attainment

1. Considerable differences between schools.
2. Not all differences are due to type of child admitted.
3. Differences did not abate with time.
4. What are differences between schools due to
   a. Physical factors: no
   b. Administrative organisation: no
   c. Characteristics of school as social institutions: yes
   Based on *Fifteen Thousand Hours*. Rutter *et al.*, 1979.

Outcome. Some of the other findings are listed in Table 4, which shows how school facilities, good organisation, style of teaching and manage-

ment of pupils have important independent influences on children's academic progress and the behavioural problems that occur.

Table 4: Association between School Factors and Child Behaviour

School Factors	Behaviour Outcome	Academic Outcome
Set Homework	Good	Good
Use Library	Moderate	Moderate
Group Planning of School Activities	Little	Good
High Topic Time (Versus Equipment Time)	Good	Little
Punishment	Moderate	Moderate
Praise	Good	Moderate
Good School Conditions	Moderate	Good
Good Staff Conditions	Nil	Nil
Pupils' Given Responsibilities	Good	Good
Checks on Homework	Little	Moderate
Combined Good School Management	Very Good	Very Good

Note: Extracted from *15 000 Hours,* Rutter *et al.,* 1979.

The association between school factors, academic success and good behaviour were as follows:

Children had more academic success at schools:

1. Where homework was regularly set and marked (some teachers do not believe in homework);

2. Where teachers had reasonable academic expectations of their pupils;

3. Where pupils were expected to care for their own resources and also where they were given tasks of responsibility;

4. Where teachers constituted good models for pupils by (a) good staff interactions; (b) willingness to see pupils about their problems and making time available to do this; (c) keeping the school and class in good decorative conditions;

5. Where teachers offer praise and approval;

6. Where there is careful and judicious use of punishment and reprimands.

7. Where curriculum and approach to discipline were agreed and supported by staff acting together and obtaining a consensus about how school should be run.

The negative factors identified by Rutter included:

1. When teachers started lessons late and ended them early;

2. The use of unofficial physical punishment and the disregard of timekeeping.

With this background information about good and bad teaching and management practices in schools, the Newcastle Research studied the possibility of modifying children's behaviour in schools and, incidentally, of modifying staff behaviour.

Plan of the Newcastle Research (Kolvin *et al.,* 1980)

There is a vast pool of psychological problems in the school community which currently available resources and methods of treatment can

hardly hope to touch. In the U.S.A. there is a saying 'Statistics say it is one in two, it cannot be me so it must be you', which implies a very high rate of problems; but research reveals less alarming figures. The prevalence of psychiatric disorder in school children is about 6 - 18% (Garside *et al.*, 1973), but in inner industrial areas of big cities it affects 25% of 12 - 13 year olds (Macmillan *et al.*, 1980). The Isle of Wight Study (Rutter *et al.*, 1970) showed that about one third of those cases probably need treatment or help, one third possibly need treatment and the other third require guidance and advice only. Unfortunately, the facilities in the community can cope with only about 5 - 10% of these. Similarly, in the U.S.A., Eli Bower (1971) estimates that only about 2% of the most seriously disturbed children are receiving help. Furthermore, the waiting lists are long and there is therefore the danger that hospitals and clinics may turn into ivory towers, which can serve only a small proportion of the seriously disturbed child population (Kolvin *et al.*, 1975).

The advantages of taking our treatment techniques out of the ivory towers of the clinic or hospital and into the child's school environment, are obvious to anyone who has considered this topic. It enables us to enhance the teacher's pastoral role; it enables us to infuse the child's ordinary environment with therapeutic potential (Redl and Wineman, 1951), as well as being able to reach children who might never come anywhere near a clinic. What is not clear is whether such efforts are effective. It is therefore imperative to try to demonstrate the effectiveness of many imaginative projects which are mounted in schools (Nicol *et al.*, 1977).

The aim of the Newcastle school-based action research project, which began in 1973, is to examine ways of preventing and treating such maladjustment in children in ordinary schools. We hope, in particular, to discover which forms of school-based help prove to be most effective. The programme consists of a series of studies focusing on the identification and treatment of maladjusted children within the ordinary school. Aspects of this area described in greater detail elsewhere (Kolvin *et al.*, 1976).

The Aim. The aim of the current research was to attempt to treat disturbance in children aged 11 - 12 years.

One of our programmes, introduced into secondary schools, essentially consisted of redeploying professional staff to work in schools, with the emphasis changed from helping individual children in clinics to helping teachers of mental health personnel to help groups of pupils. These personnel were used within the school in such a way that help became available to many pupils rather than just a few. It is important to emphasise that help thus provided constituted a supplementary service to the existing services.

Method. The method is outlined in Table 5. First, as our frame of reference was the school, we gathered our information about the children from three main sources in the school: the teachers, the children and their peers. Details of the screening techniques that we have used have been published elsewhere. In brief, children with very high scores on the measures used have been regarded as being 'deviant' or maladjusted. Children who were selected according to the screening criteria were allocated at random by their school class to

various treatment or control groups. Of course, parental permission was sought for inclusion in the trial.

Table 5: Method, Newcastle upon Tyne Research

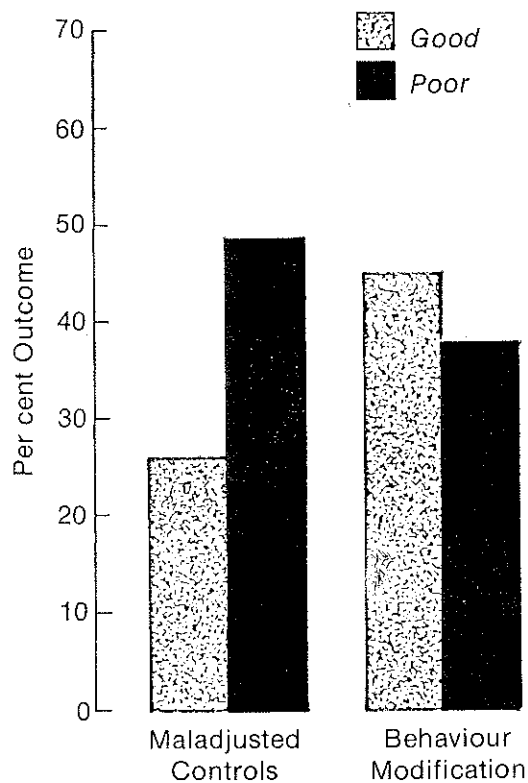|	
A. Selection of Cases	Screening using classroom measures
B. Allocation to Treatment Groups	Random by Class

C. Data Source	1. Screen — classroom
	2. Additional:
	  (a) From teacher
	  (b) From child
	  (c) From parents

D. Assessment	Baseline and at least 2 follow-ups
E. Analysis	Taking initial level of disturbance and other relevant factors into account

Fig. 2. Neurotic Behaviour (Base to Midline).

We gathered information at 3 points in time: at the beginning of the research, which constitutes our baseline picture, then on 2 subsequent occasions (18 months and 36 months from the start). For the purpose of this paper we will concentrate on the midpoint of the

research (by which time all the treatment programmes had been completed) and the final follow-up (which was 3 years after the research had begun). Only one of the schemes will be described, viz. behaviour modification with 11- to 12-year-old pupils.

1. Duration, 2 school terms;
2. Personnel involved, teachers directed by a psychologist;
3. Training, introductory followed by seminars;
4. Programme, defining and establishing goals; individual behaviour prescriptions; systematic approval of desirable behaviours (this was the main technique); Continuous supervision by consultant.

This is not an attempt to reduce the dignity and self-respect of teachers, but rather to improve their skills, confidence and sense of authority in the management of pupils. We help the teachers to observe
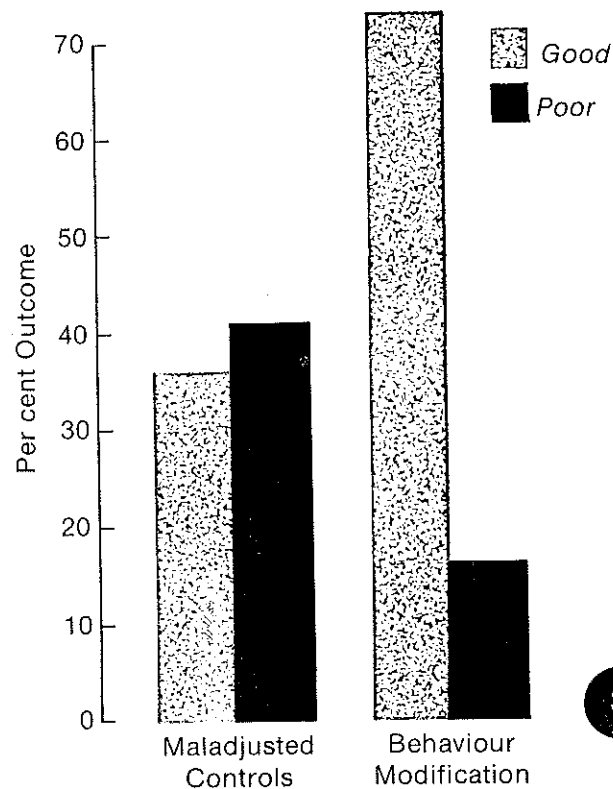

Fig. 3. Neurotic Behaviour (Base to Final).

the child, identify the problem and work out a plan of management of the problem. When talking to senior, experienced teachers, they tell us that these techniques do not differ greatly from those that they use already, but they are undertaken more systematically.

Figs. 2 and 3 illustrate the patterns that have been produced with behaviour modification conducted in the school setting. It is evident that there are considerable gains in the school situation, both at 18 months and 36 months after the start of treatment. These results show good maintenance of improvement across time. However, this improvement did not extend to the home situation at 18 months, but certainly did so at 36 months.

Teachers have an important part to play in bringing about improvement in the behaviour of children. They can affect this by a positive attitude to behaviour modification, a willingness to change their own style and to implement recommended techniques. We have discovered a significant association or link between these positive teacher attitudes and improvement shown by the children.

Conclusion

There is now sufficient evidence that maladjustment and poor educational progress may have its origins in both the home and the school.

Treatment intervention in the school can give rise to a considerable reduction in maladjustment and in an improvement in educational progress. The concept of educating children with psychological problems in the ordinary classroom, reverses the move in Europe and the U.S.A. towards labelling children as abnormal and then recommending special schools or classrooms for them. It makes psychological sense, because the child will not be perceived as different, either by adults or other children in his environment; it makes educational sense, because the child is kept in the ordinary stream of education, where there are many pressures to conform to the expectations of the ordinary school; and it makes financial sense, in that special educational facilities are rapidly becoming prohibitively costly. These have important implications, not only for children, but also practical implications for educational administrators, whose task it is to organise schools and their curricula; for colleges, whose task it is to train teachers; and for parents, both in relation to their family life and in their awareness of the importance of the environment to which their children are exposed in schools.

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