

January 1977

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Recommended Citation

Otto, E. P., & Gasson, I. S. (1977). Attitude Change in Response to an In-Service Teacher Education Programme. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.1977v2n2.4>

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Attitude Change in Response to an In-Service Teacher Education Programme

by

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"How can I tell how successful this course has been?" is becoming an increasingly common question in tertiary education. This interest in tertiary teaching and learning is reflected in the fact that one-half of all Australian universities now have tertiary teaching units.

A simple and useful model for evaluation purposes (Hall, 1975) involves the following aspects:—

- (a) Input — this includes students, teachers, educational technology, the administration and the teaching/learning environment
- (b) Process — this embraces educational aims and objectives, teaching methods, organization of material, ways of learning and assessment procedures
- (c) Outcomes — the educational changes in the students (and also the staff) due to the learning experiences encountered in the course, are involved in this stage of the evaluation process.

There are a number of reasons why evaluation is important. Firstly, discrepancies between the actual and the ideal situation can be detected, causes identified and corrective measures instituted at all stages of the evaluative model, to serve the interests of increased efficiency and improved staff and student satisfaction. Secondly, courses which are continually being evaluated are better able to meet changing demands from students, from the society which the educational institution is serving, and also better able to adjust to internal changes in staff numbers and expertise. Thirdly, evaluation properly conducted can provide a statement of accountability.

Some of the most commonly used techniques of evaluation include the use of direct observation of classroom teaching by means of interaction analysis (Flanders, 1970; Bales, 1950), rating scales (Good, 1959; Remmers, 1963), numerical and graphical scales (Guildford, 1954), as well as various types of check lists. As well as direct observational approaches, indirect means such as the use of questionnaires (Oppenheim, 1966; Moser and Kalton, 1971), interviews, and the scrutiny of assessment results have all been widely used.

This study focusses on teachers' attitude change towards children as a result of exposure to a 12 week in-service teacher education programme

conducted at the Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education in 1975. One of the aims of the programme was to produce attitude change in the teachers participating in it, as well as to make them more familiar with recent developments in educational theory and practice and to allow them the opportunity to study specific areas of interest (see Appendix A).

METHOD

Subjects:

The study group consisted of eleven primary school teachers from the Wide Bay Region in Queensland and fourteen from the Central Queensland Region. All the teachers were selected to participate in the in-service programme by the Queensland Education Department. The teachers selected, 19 males and 6 females, all had at least ten years classroom teaching experience.

Control Group:

Twenty-five primary teachers were matched on a one-to-one basis with the experimental in-service group on the following criteria:

- (a) Sex
- (b) Age (within five years)
- (c) Classroom teaching experience
- (d) Teaching competency (as judged by Education Department Inspectors and school principals concerned)
- (e) Number of years of teacher training
- (f) School district in which they taught (i.e. Wide Bay or Central Queensland).

Data Collection and Procedure:

At the commencement of the in-service programme the experimental and control groups completed the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory (M.T.A.I.). At the completion of the twelve week programme both groups again completed this inventory.

Of the group of twenty-five teachers who acted as controls and to whom the inventories were mailed, sixteen correctly completed and returned the forms. A reminder letter with an additional form was sent to those who failed to respond the first time and this resulted in a further eight forms being returned satisfactorily completed. One experimental subject did not complete the M.T.A.I. post-test form correctly, reducing the effective size of the study group to 23 matched pairs.

In the words of the test authors, the M.T.A.I. is designed to measure "those attitudes which predict how well he (the teacher) will get along with pupils". The manual presents data to show that persons scoring high on the test tend to be better teachers than persons scoring low on the test. The M.T.A.I. appeared to be an excellent instrument for detecting whether any attitudinal changes had occurred in the teachers because of their participation in the in-service programme.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the mean gain of both the experimental and control groups on Teacher Attitude Score (t-test for related samples). The gain for the experimental groups was statistically significant at a level of 1%.

TABLE 1

GAIN ON M.T.A.I. SCORE FOR EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS			
(N=23)			
		EXPERIMENTAL	CONTROL
M.T.A.I. gain:	Mean	15.00	4.48
	S.D.	24.10	15.60
	Sig. level	1%	N.S.

CONCLUSION

It would appear that the twelve-week in-service programme significantly and positively influenced participating teachers' attitudes towards pupil-teacher relations. Future studies might profitably investigate whether any such attitudinal change, if detected, was actually demonstrated in altered classroom behaviour.

APPENDIX A

Details of the In-service Education Programme

This is only an outline of the content covered. Full details may be obtained from the authors on request.

Core Subjects: Modern Development — the study of educational themes and their effects.
Remedial Education.
Early Childhood Education.

Child Development and Psychology.
Instructional Strategies.
Current Issues.

Creative Subjects: Creative Drama.
Improvisation.
Music Curriculum.

Library Research Skills

School Visits: Involving viewing colleagues in action and discussing ideas, and the video-taping of lessons taken by the In-service teachers themselves.

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