

# Pre-Service Training in Adlerian Psychology

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As the result of the present state of psychology which is plagued with divergent and often contradictory ideas and theories, student teachers are usually put into the classrooms with very little or no clear knowledge of how to implement psychological principles in understanding pupil behavior or in the management of discipline and other classroom problems. When discipline or classroom management problems occur, the student teacher is often threatened and acts impulsively. Typically, the teacher's response is based upon no systematic theory of psychology for understanding the behavior of the student; thus, autocracy may prevail and potentially harmful punishment usually occurs.

## Understanding Child Behavior

That child behavior is a complex phenomenon has long been recognized. Thus, if a teacher is to work with children, he must have an adequate background and training in the understanding of human behavior. Ojemann and Wilkenson (1939) published data showing that when teachers learn to know their pupils as personalities in their respective environment, the teachers tend to become more effective guides for learning. To be effective guides for learning, teachers need to have training in the understanding of child development and the interpretation of child behavior (Dreikurs, 1959). Implicit in this approach is the assumption that a thorough understanding of a child in his environment (i.e., his place in the home, his peer group, his school situation, etc.) may enable the teacher to make reasonable hypotheses as to the goals of a child's behavior.

It has been the author's experience in training teachers that few trainees can *explain* students' behavior. Most only *describe* behavior. In order to describe behavior, a teacher does not need special training in psychology or related courses. Any individual can label students as overactive, lazy, immature, or daydreamers. In order for teachers to explain behavior for real understanding they need to see behavior in terms of its purposefulness; consequently, behavior should be viewed as a means of understanding the general purposes of an individual. Teachers must begin to ask themselves what is the students' purpose in being lazy, immature, or aggressive? Only when this type of question is answered can teachers begin to be effective in dealing with classroom difficulties.

Every child is primarily concerned with finding his place in the group and his actions are purposive even though he may not know their purpose. A trained teacher can perceive the purposes of a child in his class and can understand children merely by watching their movements and interactions in the classroom. All efforts are directed at finding a place in the group. Some may utilize constructive means (good grades, teacher approval, athletics, or student government) while a discouraged child switches to the destructive or useless side and misbehaves.

Implicit in Adlerian theory is the establishment of a democratic human relationship in the classroom. Teachers tend to be autocratic and punish often because other procedures have failed; there is usually an immediate need for an appropriate teacher-reaction which serves to provide a necessary control over the immediate situation. If teachers are not taught to implement democratic classroom procedures, they often revert to autocratic practices which tend to be easily implemented, but which usually have no lasting benefit in controlling behavior.

### Design of Study

The present research was an attempt to provide a pre-service training experience which would teach and demonstrate the use of the teleoanalytic or Adlerian theory of personality dynamics. The purpose of this study was to determine differences in students' perception of climate or learning environment and social structure in the classroom between those groups of students taught by student teachers trained in the teleoanalytic approach of Alfred Adler and those groups of students taught by student teachers not trained in Adlerian principles.

The sample consisted of two classes of secondary student teachers enrolled in educational principles courses at Fairmont State College. Each class had an enrollment of twenty-six students. One class was taught Adlerian principles by the author while the other class, taught by another instructor, was taught classroom management techniques not affiliated with a psychological theory.

After instruction of eight weeks (the instructional program is described below), both groups reported to their student teaching stations where they administered the Learning Environment Inventory (Anderson, 1971) which measures class climate as a pretest and also a sociometric which determines isolates and rejectees in the classroom. During the last week of student teaching the same instruments were administered as a post-test. Each of the 52 student teachers had approximately 60 students, consequently data was collected on approximately 3,120 students.

The following changes were anticipated:

1. The student of the teleoanalytic student teachers would perceive their classes as more *cohesive* than the students of the non-teleoanalytic teachers. Cohesiveness appears basic to the organization and structure of the group. Once organized, the group must establish objectives, adopt agenda of an informal or formal nature, and begin to work. At this point one may assess the morale, attractiveness, or perhaps the cohesiveness which exists within the group (Glanz and Hayes, 1968).

2. The students of the teleoanalytic student teachers would perceive their classes as having less *friction* than the students of the non-teleoanalytic teachers. Energy expended in conflict cannot be channelled in other directions and the emotional upset resulting from extensive or continued conflict can be expected to impair learning (Anderson, 1968).

3. The students of the teleoanalytic student teachers would perceive their classes as having less *cliqueness* than the students of the non-teleoanalytic teachers. Subgroups or cliques within a class can lead to hostility among members of various parts of the class. These cliques offer protection to those who are failures in the group at large and provide alternate norms which presumably lead to less than optimal group productivity.

4. The students of the teleoanalytic student teachers would perceive their classes as having less *favoritism* than the students of the non-teleoanalytic teachers. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that the students tend to react differently as a result of teacher arbitrariness.

5. The students of the teleo-analytic student teachers would perceive their classes as more *democratic* than the students of the non-teleoanalytic student teachers. A basic premise of Adlerian theory is the variable of democracy. Dreikurs (1968) maintains that in our growing democratic atmosphere it is impossible to treat children as inferiors. Neither parents nor teachers can any longer "make" a child behave or conform; pressure from the outside has lost its effectiveness and must be replaced with stimulation from within.

6. The teleoanalytic student teachers would have a reduction in the number of isolates and rejectees in the classroom when compared with the non-teleoanalytic teachers. While Adlerian theory provides a rationale for teachers to deal effectively in classroom social relationships, the sociometric can identify those needing help in their social relationships and thus provide a basis for further diagnosis and remedial action.

### **Program Designed to Assist Teleoanalytic Teachers**

One group of student teachers were taught the teleo-analytic approach to classroom management by the investigator. The class met four 50-minute periods per week for a total of eight weeks. Following instruction, the student teachers reported to designated schools for the student teaching practicum.

The required texts were *Psychology in the Classroom* and *Encouraging Children to Learn* by Dreikurs (1968), and Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs (1963), respectively. Instruction consisted of the following units:

I. *Understanding the Child*. This consisted of topics such as the formation of the life style, family atmosphere, family constellation, and the four goals of misbehavior. Particular attention was spent on the student teachers understanding themselves before realistic case studies were presented for discussion. Each student teacher had to orally report on himself according to the topics listed previously.

II. *Specific Methods of Correction*. This unit consisted of the necessary steps for dealing with behavior in the classroom. This included observing the child within his social setting, psychological investigation and recognizing the child's goals, psychological disclosure and reorientation.

III. *Democratic Classroom Organization*. Topics discussed in this unit were the teacher as a group leader, classroom atmosphere, reckoning with a group, and competition versus cooperation. Particular attention was given to specific ways to implement democratic procedures in the classroom.

IV. *Process of Encouragement*. In addition to teaching the techniques of encouragement regarding the academic areas, consideration was given to encouragement in personal-social adjustment.

V. *Sociometry*. In order to determine subgroups in larger groups, the leaders of the class, the rejectees, and isolates, a sociometric test was taught to the student teachers (Johnston, Peters, and Euraiff, 1959). Although the sociometric test does not indicate how to improve the social adjustment of pupils, it does

identify those needing help in their social relationships. Once the social structure of the group is determined, the teleanalytic approach gives the student teachers the necessary rationale for improving the social structure.

One period per week, Critical Incidents films were shown that forced the student teachers to respond to simulated behavior problems. The responses were based on the teleanalytic approach and a group consensus was generally reached. This gave the student teachers practice in resolving classroom conflicts before entering the actual classroom. In addition to the previous instruction, the teleanalytic student teachers observed each week a group counseling session with ninth graders led by the investigator. The purpose of this observation was to further expose the student teachers to dynamics of group behavior.

During student teaching, the investigator met with the teleanalytic student teachers every other week to assist them with particular difficulties. The investigator enlisted the aid of the group to help solve many problems. This appeared to give the student teachers encouragement to implement specific techniques in the classroom.

### **Instructional Programs for Non-teleanalytic Teachers**

The non-teleanalytic teachers were taught an identical number of class periods. The main difference between instructors of both groups was that while the investigator has been trained in the use of psychological principles in the classroom, the instructor of the non-teleanalytic teachers has been trained in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialization in Social Studies.

Units of the course consisted of topics such as (1) aims and purposes of education, (2) understanding the student, (3) control, (4) resources in education, (5) development of the secondary school. The course had no consistent psychological approach for solving classroom difficulties or maintaining appropriate climate. Generalizations were brought about through class discussion and group consensus.

### **Results**

Although no differences were found between the teleanalytic and non-teleanalytic student teachers on the classroom climate variables of cohesiveness and cliqueness, differences were found on the friction, favoritism, and democracy dimensions. Utilizing a 2 X 2 factorial Analysis of Variance the teleanalytic student teachers were perceived by their students as more democratic and displaying less friction and favoritism than the non-teleanalytic student teachers. (The statistical analysis is available on request.)

Utilizing a Chi Square Test of Independence, the teleanalytic student teachers had a statistically significant reduction of isolates and rejectees as measured by a sociometric test than the non-teleanalytic student teachers. The teleanalytic teachers had 33 positive changes (changes from being perceived by the class as an isolate or rejectee to that of being accepted) while the non-teleanalytic teachers had 8 positive changes.

## Summary

This study was undertaken as an effort to improve preservice training experience. The instruction demonstrated the use of a psychological approach which would, hopefully, improve the climate and social structure of the classroom.

Adlerians maintain that we are witnessing a revolution in the field of education in that rapid changes in concepts and methods are occurring with varying speed and extend throughout the school systems in our country. These changes reflect a democratic evolution with its far reaching changes in inter-personal relationships and social settings. If the above belief is accepted, changes should take place in teacher training institutions at the undergraduate level.

The results of this study indicate that teachers probably need assistance for democratic classroom management. It appears that teachers have an influence concerning their students' perception of classroom climate, and that teachers can be taught to implement psychological principles that will reduce friction and favoritism. The teleoanalytic approach gave the student teachers a basis or rationale from which to operate in the classroom.

While both groups of student teachers had a knowledge of sociometrics, the teleoanalytic group was better able to reduce the number of isolates and rejectees. Since the difference between groups was that one had a knowledge of class management according to Adlerian Psychology while the other group was taught no specific psychological approach, the differences found can be attributed to the teleoanalytic methodology. The teleoanalytic approach appeared to give the student teachers the needed psychological approach with which to solve the problem.

Because this study was mainly concerned with secondary student teachers, the author feels as if similar studies should be generalized to other populations such as elementary student teachers and experienced classroom teachers. Elementary student teachers or present elementary teachers are at an advantage because they are with the students the greater part of the day. This gives the teacher a better perspective to learn about their students in a social setting. Experienced teachers also may be an advantage because of the experience they can bring to the training sessions. It has been the authors' experience that student teachers have had very little experience in the classroom prior to student teaching; consequently, many will not place importance on the simulated activities which were presented during the training sessions. Possibly the training experience should be conducted during the student teacher experience rather than immediately prior to that experience.

## References

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