

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF PUPILS OF ACADEMIC AND DIVERSIFIED COURSES

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Summary

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Engineering and Secretarial Practice students of the Diversified Course formed the experimental group and the students of the Academic Course the control group in this study of the Secondary School courses in Madras State, India.

The effect of the two courses was assessed by a comparison of the performance of the pupils in school tests and the public examinations. Their marks in languages and mathematics obtained in the S.S.L.C. Exam and the First-Year Polytechnic Exam were also compared. It was found, that 'low' achievers who opted for the Diversified Course made better progress in common core subjects than those who opted for the purely Academic Course.

The conclusion was that the Diversified Courses were of as sound educational value as the Academic, and might be introduced into more schools.

The report recommends

- (a) The devising of suitable tests of admission to the Diversified Course.
- (b) Schemes for job-orientation and work experience for the Diversified Course pupils who do not join the Polytechnic.
- (c) Longitudinal course studies to investigate the success of pupils, who undergo Diversified Course studies, in
 - (i) Further Academic Studies
 - (ii) Technical Courses
 - (iii) Jobs.

Report

It was felt by the S.I.T.U. Council of Educational Research that the Scheme of Diversified Courses in Secondary schools of Tamil Nadu (Madras

State) in force for over 25 years required comprehensive investigation not only because of the need for periodical evaluation of educational systems but also because of the vast changes in diverse fields in a developing country like India aiming at quantitative and qualitative improvement.

A resolution of the State Advisory Board of Education for the abolition of Diversified Courses in 1968 (since held in abeyance) gave the provocation for the investigation; more particularly, in view of the opinion of several heads of schools which had tried the course over the years, that Diversified Courses had a useful role to play in the educational set-up of secondary schools. The Council of Educational Research thought it necessary and urgent to undertake a time bound Pilot Study confined to one or two specific areas of the problem, leaving open the question of comprehensive research on the Project in all its aspects. Hence the title of the investigation, "A Comparative Study of the Achievements of Pupils offering Academic and Diversified Courses as revealed by their marks in schools and S.S.L.C. Public Examinations."

The purpose of the study among other things was to investigate the comparative effect of the two types of courses on the achievements of pupils in the several school subjects in general, and on 'LOW' achievers in particular.

The Pilot Study extending over a period of about 5 months between November 1970 and March, 1971, was limited in scope.

'Engineering' and Secretarial Practice' were the two diversified courses chosen for the study.

20 boys schools were chosen, 10 from the city and 10 from Muffassal representing a cross section of pupils of both urban and rural areas; and 10 Polytechnics were contacted. In the final analysis, 16 schools from which data were complete, and 4 Polytechnics were included.

Statistical analysis of marks of pupils-both schools and S.S.L.C. Public Examination-analysis of replies to Questionnaire, and interview with heads of participating institutions and concerned teachers were the basis of the Findings and Recommendations.

The marks of two batches of students from the selected schools (one for the period 1964-67 and the other for 1965-68) aggregating 446 for the Academic course and an equal number for the two Diversified Courses were analysed statistically.

Students belonging to Engineering/Secretarial Practice Courses formed the Experimental Group, and those belonging to the Academic Course, the Control Group.

The effect of the two courses of studies was assessed by comparing the changes in the performance of pupils of the two groups in the tests-school and S.S.L.C. Public Examination. The 'net shift' standard error and significance of the difference between the changes were tested using formulae and procedures as recommended for statistical study in the books of Quin McNemar and J.P. Guilford.

The "top 25% of pupils of each of the selected schools (on the basis of the aggregate-marks in Standard IX) were classified as pupils of 'high ability' and the 'bottom 25% as of 'low ability'(Schools marks were converted to standard scores with 50 as mean and 10 as S.D.)

Comparison was also made of the marks in languages and Mathematics secured by pupils offering Academic and Diversified Courses in the S.S.L.C. Examination and First Year Polytechnic Examination in all the prescribed subjects.

Findings

One of the most significant findings of the study is that 'low' achievers who opted for the Diversified Courses made better progress in common core subjects than those who took a purely academic course. This was supported by the opinions of experienced headmasters and teachers concerned.

The most unscientific manner in which pupils were admitted for the Diversified courses, and the rush for admission to colleges of those passing out of high schools with Diversified course training, without going to suitable follow-up courses in Polytechnics were noted by the investigators as a result of the analysis of the replies to the relevant questions in the questionnaire. This highlights the fact that monetary and human resources are not used for optimum return. These must be taken note of in any future scheme of educational reform at the secondary school levels.

Recommendations

1. Diversified courses are of as potentially sound educational value as the Academic course. The former are not to be treated as inferior courses.
2. Diversified courses may be introduced in more schools, and methods of teaching improved to exploit to the full the 'Practicals' of the courses as the motivating force for developing skills and under-standings, attitudes and interests, and general verbal abilities.
3. Schemes for job - orientation and work-experience for a year or so (not too long a period for those who do not join Polytechnics) in liaison with small scale industries and agricultural sectors may be devised experimentally.
4. Longitudinal case studies may be undertaken with a view to investigating the success of those who undergo diversified course studies in secondary schools (i) in further academic studies. (ii) technical courses (iii) jobs. This would enable the authorities to assess the impact of the Diversified Courses in the secondary school population.
5. Suitable tests should be developed on the basis of which admissions should generally be made to the Diversified Courses in the beginning of the 10th standard. (11th standard being taken as the final year of the secondary schools)