

ABSTRACTS

Early detection of learning difficulties.

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Abstract

The results of a longitudinal study in the boroughs of Byron and Kessariani to detect learning difficulties at an early stage are presented. 788 children aged 4.6-5.6 years attending kindergarten in September 1983, were screened for behaviour disorder, hyperkinesis, capacity for concentration, language delay, by their teachers, with the help of two questionnaires; the Rutter et al. for teachers (1970a) and the Gillberg et al. (1982). From these children, 97 were selected for further study. The selection was based on the scores of the questionnaires. Thus three groups were formed: The experimental group A (N=40) with high scores (high-risk for presenting learning difficulties) and two comparison groups; group B (N=14) of medium risk, and group C (N=43) with low scores on the questionnaires (no risk).

A battery of psychological tests was given to the 97 children. Their mothers gave information about the socio-economic status of the family and the child's personal history.

One year later, at the end of the first grade, the children were re-examined with reading, writing and arithmetic tests. A neurological examination was also performed.

The teachers completed the Rutter questionnaire for teachers. A similar procedure was followed at the end of the second grade.

The main findings of the research are the following. In kindergarten, children of group C scored significantly higher at all psychological tests in comparison with the children of the other two groups.

At the end of the first grade, 36% of children of group A (high-risk) and 15% of group B, had not learnt to read, write or calculate up to ten, while at the end of the second grade only six children had severe learning difficulties.

The children who could not read and write had been spotted by the nursery teachers as presenting language delay and behaviour disorder.

There were also differences between these children and the rest of the sample in the neurological examination. From the psychological tests used in kindergarten, The Frostig I and IV and the TMS were the best predictors of learning difficulty.

Incentive systems and problem solving under conditions of cooperation, competition and individualistic goal structures.

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Abstract

The relative effectiveness of cooperative, competitive and individualistic goal structures may be dependent on the type of incentive system. The problem solving effectiveness of 108 eighth-grade Greek children were studied with cooperative, competitive and individualistic goal structures, and with performance-contingent, task-non-contingent, and no-reward incentive systems. Problem solving effectiveness under a cooperative goal structure was higher than competitive goal structures and individualistic goal structures only under the no-reward incentive system. Comparison within incentive systems indicated that under a no-reward incentive system, the cooperative goal structure resulted in highest problem solving effectiveness; under a performance-contingent incentive system the competitive goal structure was highest, and under a task-non-contingent incentive system, the individualistic goal structure was highest. Also, anxiety was lowest under the cooperative goal structure and highest under the individualistic goal structure.

Individual differences in mental abilities; a synthesis of new approaches

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Abstract

The present article describes recent approaches to the nature and measurement of individual differences in cognitive performance; these approaches are mainly based on information processing theory and on schema theory. The article proposes a new theoretical explanation of individual differences which was derived from the comparative examination of the above theories and was supported by empirical research. According to this new approach, namely the theory of cognitive compensation, individual differences are the products of interactions of the individual's knowledge and mental abilities. Seven sources of individual differences are isolated and an attempt is made to examine the applications of this approach to psychology and education.

School performance: Social, psychological and physical parameters; psychiatric disturbance and school achievement

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Abstract

The incidence of psychiatric disturbance in 6-8 year-old children of the Greater Athens area was studied by asking the parents and teachers of 603 children to complete the relevant questionnaires for parents and teachers (Rutter, Tizard and Whitmore, 1970). After detailed study of the results, the cut-off point for the parents questionnaire was put at 13+, while for the teachers' questionnaire at 10+ (Papatheophilou et al., 1981). Disturbance was negatively correlated with school marks, school achievement, as measured by reading and arithmetic tests, and IQ (Vocabulary, Draw-a-Man, Visual-Motor Integration) and motor coordination. Disturbance was positively correlated with family size. The incidence of disturbance, according to the teachers' questionnaire, was similar to that of school children in big cities of other countries, but greater according to the parents' questionnaire. Hyperkinesis was the most prominent characteristic of disturbed children in both questionnaires, especially in boys.