

Milwaukee Project

The **Milwaukee Project** was a program begun in the 1960s designed to improve the IQs and scholastic achievement of children at risk and to study the effects of intellectual stimulation on children from deprived environments.

Children from deprived environments

Rick Heber of the University of Wisconsin–Madison examined the statistics of districts in the city of Milwaukee. His attention was drawn towards one district, where the residents had the lowest median income and lowest level of education in the city. The unemployment rate was also very high. Although this district contained only 3% of the city's population, 33% of all children who had been labeled "mentally retarded" lived there.

The project

Heber selected 40 newborns from this district. All had a mother with an IQ lower than 80. In many cases the father was absent. The newborns were randomly assigned to an experimental and a control group. Mothers of children in the experimental group received education, vocational rehabilitation, and training in homemaking and child care. The children were brought to infant stimulation centers, where they received a high quality educational program designed to develop language and cognitive skills. They also received three balanced meals a day. They stayed there five days a week, seven hours a day. When the children were six the program ended. The children then attended local schools. Both the experimental group and the control group were tested an equal number of times throughout the project.

Results

By age six all of the children from the experimental group had higher IQs than all of the children from the control group. Mean IQ was 120 in the experimental group and 87 in the control group. After the children left the program their IQs started declining. By the time both groups were ten years old the IQs of the children of the experimental group had decreased to 105. Mean IQ in the control group was 85.

Controversy

The Milwaukee Project's claimed success was celebrated in the popular media and by famous psychologists. However, later in the project, Rick Heber, the principal investigator, was discharged from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and convicted and imprisoned for large-scale abuse of federal funding for private gain. Two of Heber's colleagues in the project were also convicted for similar abuses. The project's results were not published in any refereed scientific journals, and even the existence of the project as described by Heber has been called into question. Nevertheless, many college textbooks in psychology and education have reported the project's results uncritically.^[1]

High/Scope

The **High/Scope** early childhood education philosophy is a method of running a preschool, kindergarten, or elementary school developed in the United States in the 1960s. It is now common there and in some other countries

The philosophy behind High/Scope, based on Jean Piaget's ideas, is that children should be involved actively in their own learning. They "learn by doing", often working with hands on materials and carrying out projects of their own choosing. The adults working with the children see themselves more as facilitators or partners than managers or supervisors. High/Scope's approach encompasses all aspects of child development and involves teachers and parents in supporting and extending children's emotional, intellectual, social, and physical skills and abilities.

In a High/Scope school, different areas of the classroom are designated for different activities, for example water play, reading, sand play, art, writing, dramatic play, etc. Children are intended to be able to access all facilities independently and be able to take some responsibility for use of these areas.

An important part of the High/Scope approach is the plan-do-review sequence. Children first plan what materials they want to work with and what they want to do (this can be done formally or informally in small groups). Only

once they have made a plan, however vague, of what they want to do can they go and do it. Then, after this choice worktime, the children discuss what they have been doing and whether it was successful.

Origin

As director of special services in the Ypsilanti (Michigan) public school district, David Weikart became increasingly interested in the failure of a number of at-risk high schoolers from poor neighborhoods. These students did poorly on district-wide, standardized tests and also received low scores in IQ assessments.

Weikart brought together, and collaborated with, a committee of elementary education leaders that included Perry School's Charles Eugene Beatty, Michigan's first African-American principal. Known as the Perry Preschool Project (1962), members discussed possible changes to teaching methods and curriculum choices. Even though they did not expect to radically change Ypsilanti's teaching core (which mostly worked), they explored why it seemingly failed a certain population of students.

While searching for better teaching methods and programs, Weikart (now also part of a special services committee tackling the same issue) zeroed in on programs for 3 and 4 year-olds. Outside the normal organization of the school district, Weikart sought a chance to open Michigan's first preschool. He hired four teachers and began operation at Perry Elementary School.

Weikart, Perry School's teachers and staff chose to differ from traditional nursery school settings by designing a program that focused on a child's intellectual maturation rather than a child's social and emotional advances - they wanted a program that:

1. Possessed a firm, legitimate bed of theory for teaching/learning; ungirding its structure
2. Supported the child's talents through an active process of learning
3. Relied on teachers, administrators, and families to support the success of the program.

Today High/Scope's approach has been used successfully in preschools and elementary schools, both public and private, in a wide range of settings including Indian Reservations, large cities, and small towns.