

Education and Treatment of Children

Editors' Introduction Published in Volume 22(2), 1999

The Contribution of Data Based Case Studies to the Education and Treatment of Children

The case study, as a method of investigation, has played an enduring role in the evolution of scientific inquiry (Bolger, 1965). In fact, it was the sole methodology of clinical investigation by practitioners during the first half of the 20th century (Hersen and Barlow, 1976). However, as a science of human behavior has matured, the limitations of case studies — especially those based on only anecdotal impressions without quantitative data across time — have become more obvious, and journals have tended to reject reports that do not come up to the standards of current scientific practices.

The series of studies reported in this special issue of *Education and Treatment of Children (ETC)* entitled, *Level 1 research: Improving our education and treatment through simple accountability procedures*, re-asserts the value of case studies. Case studies have made important contributions to understanding human behavior by suggesting potential new leads for further investigation, by confirming the value of practices already thought to be effective, or by suggesting limitations of previously-accepted practices.

This special issue suggests three further values of data based case studies. The first is accountability to clients/learners, to supervisors, to funding sources, and to oneself. This accountability, in turn, brings another value: improved effectiveness of teaching/training/treatment. The third value involves the merging of science and practice. Hawkins and Hursh (1992) described 3 levels of research, with Level 1 resembling a case study, but guided by the repeated measurement of behavior over time rather than by only anecdotal information, as had been the tradition. The reports in this special issue highlight the value of data based case studies as a means to bring science into practice by requiring case studies to be data based. At the same time, such case studies bring practice into science by providing leads for theory and research. The editors of *ETC* would like to extend our appreciation to Rob Hawkins and Judy Mathews for organizing and coordinating this special issue.

ETC will now accept for publication data based case studies as exemplified in this issue. The journal is devoted to the dissemination of information concerning the development of services for children and youth. A primary criterion for publication is that the material be of direct value to educators and other childcare and behavioral health professionals in improving their teaching/training/treatment effectiveness. Manuscripts that document Level 1 or Level 2 research as defined by Hawkins and Hursh (1992), and as discussed in Hawkins and Mathews (1999) and Moxley (1998), will be considered for publication in the Data Based Case Studies section of *ETC*. The minimum requirements for a data based case study are: (1) a demonstration of direct, quantitative measurement of specific

client behaviors repeated over time that guided the clinical and/or educational decision making reported in the study; and (2) a contribution to advancing teaching/training effectiveness by serving (a) as a source of ideas and hypotheses for further research, (b) as a source of developing teaching/training/treatment techniques, such as a study of a rare phenomenon, (c) as a counterinstance for notions that are considered to be universally applicable, or (d) as persuasive and motivational (Kazdin, 1998). Replications in real-life situations of procedures developed under rigorous research protocols are welcome, especially when the original study was a highly controlled experiment. Also, data based case studies that highlight efficient and effective means to collect data that guide treatment/teaching will be accepted.

Manuscripts must follow the guidelines described in the Manuscript Guidelines published in each issue of *ETC* and are submitted to Managing Editor, *ETC*, c/o The Pressley Ridge Schools, 530 Marshall Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15214.

Bernie Fabry
R.F. Dickie
April, 1999

References

- Bolger, H. (1965). The case study method. In B. B. Wolman (Ed.), *Handbook of clinical psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Hawkins, R. P., & Hursh, D. E. (1992). Levels of research for clinical practice: It isn't as hard as you think. *The West Virginia Journal of Psychological Research and Practice*, *1*, 61-71.
- Hawkins, R. P., & Mathews, J. R. (1999). Frequent monitoring of clinical outcomes: research and accountability for clinical practice. *Education and Treatment of Children*, *22*, 117-135.
- Hersen, M., & Barlow, D. H. (1976). *Single-case experimental designs: Strategies for studying behavior change*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Kazdin, A. E. (1998). *Research design in clinical psychology* (3rd Ed). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Moxley, R. A. (1998). Treatment-only designs and student self-recording as strategies for public school teachers. *Education and Treatment of Children*, *21*, 37-61.