

LEARNING
WITHOUT
A TEACHER

A Study of Tasks
and Assistance
during Adult
Self-teaching Projects

THE ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION

R. W. B. JACKSON/*Director*

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A Study of Tasks
and Assistance
during Adult
Self-teaching Projects

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Educational Research Series No. 3
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

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THE ONTARIO INSTITUTE
FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
102 Bloor Street West
Toronto 5, Ontario
Canada

Printed in Canada

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Toronto,
October, 1967

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INTRODUCTION

The writer's inquiry that resulted in this research project began in January 1963 when he received an assignment in a graduate course taught by Professor Cyril O. Houle at the University of Chicago.

Professor Houle had presented to the class his list of the fundamental steps of program development. The assignment was to analyze and describe the way in which the steps had been applied in the development of one educational program.

The writer chose a program of self-education (his own intensive preparation during the five weeks before his Ph.D. French examination) for that assignment. He was surprised to discover that he had followed most of the fundamental steps of program development during that self-teaching project, although at the time he had not been aware that he was doing so.¹

This analysis and much subsequent thought led to the development of the present study in 1964 with the assistance of a Ph.D. dissertation committee consisting of Professors Cyril O. Houle, Philip W. Jackson, and Bruce Joyce. With the support of Dean D. F. Dadson, it was completed and reported² in 1964-65 while the author was on the faculty of the College of Education, University of Toronto. A summary of the study was presented at the National Seminar on Adult Education Research³ and was published.⁴

The present report is a slightly condensed and modified version of the original dissertation. Although microfilm copies and six duplicated copies of the earlier report have been available, the interest displayed has clearly indicated the need for it in a more convenient and readily available form.

This report is expected to be useful to graduate students, professors, and researchers in the field of adult education and extension education. In addition, researchers and students in education and psychology who are interested in independent study, individualized instruction, and human learning may find that the framework and findings reported here are relevant to their own research. Finally, some administrators and instructors in schools, colleges, and adult education may be interested in considering the implications of the study for their own efforts to develop and assist people who want to continue learning throughout their adult years.

¹A mimeographed copy of this report, entitled "An Analysis of One Program of Self-education," is available from the author.

²Allen M. Tough, "The Teaching Tasks Performed by Adult Self-teachers" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Education, University of Chicago, 1965).

³Chicago, February 14, 1966.

⁴Allen Tough, "The Assistance Obtained by Adult Self-teachers," *Adult Education*, XVII (Autumn, 1966), 30-37.

Since 1965, the writer's efforts to understand certain aspects of an individual's learning have continued. In 1966, a comprehensive list of major research questions was developed by a research team at The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, consisting of Ray Devlin, Heather Knoepfli, Vida Stanius, and Allen Tough. The scope of the phenomenon being studied was enlarged from self-teaching projects to learning projects which could include assistance from a professional instructor.

During the first half of 1967, the research team planned and conducted a study of why a person begins and continues a learning project.

Although the study described in the present report restricted the learning projects to those in which there was not much reliance on professional teachers and organized groups, a surprising amount and variety of assistance were obtained by the learners. Consequently, the research team has now turned its attention to further aspects of this phenomenon of assistance during learning projects. From June 1967 to September 1968, the research team will study the process of realizing the need for help and of seeking it, the specific types of help received, certain major variables in the help-receiving situation, and ways of improving the help available to individual learners.¹

¹A mimeographed paper outlining the line of inquiry from 1963 to 1967 and the proposed study for 1967-68 is available from the author.