

ABSTRACT

Studies have shown that student tutors can help tutees attain academic gains, especially when tutors have been specially prepared for the task. Preparation here implies training in content matter; modelling acceptable tutor behaviours; use of appropriate instructional materials and keeping simple records of tutees' progress.

This study was undertaken to assess the relative effectiveness of trained and untrained grade 9 student tutors in helping grade 3 tutees acquire certain mathematical skills and concepts. The sample which was drawn from two All-Age Schools (Experimental and Control) in a rural area of Jamaica (currently engaged in a cross-age tutoring programme) consisted of sixteen grade 9 tutors and sixty-five grade 3 tutees.

This investigation was conducted in five stages:

1. Designing and administering opinionnaires for teachers and tutors to ascertain their opinion of the existing cross-age tutoring programme.
2. Specification of objectives for instruction in the metric measurement of capacity for grade 3 and preparation of a criterion-referenced achievement test of this dimension.
3. Administering the test to all subjects participating in the investigation, and using the results to develop an instructional package together with the corresponding aids necessary to accomplish the stated objectives.

4. Training tutors in the Experimental group and then engaging both trained and untrained tutors in teaching activities.
5. Administering a post-test to assess the effectiveness of the training exercise on the academic performance of both tutors and tutees.

The post-test scores showed greater gains for those subjects tutored by trained as against untrained tutors ($t = 3.10$; $p < .01$). It was also noted that both trained and untrained tutors improved their academic competence in the area in which they gave instruction.

With the acute shortage of educational facilities in Jamaica and with the pupil teacher ratio nearing 1:55, the conclusion drawn was that student tutoring could probably be an effective method of addressing the need for individualized instruction. This should not be seen as an alternative to teacher-led instruction however, but rather as an interim remedial measure.