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The Development of a Survey for the Measurement of Attitudes Toward School

Cynthia F. Gray
University of North Florida

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SURVEY
FOR THE MEASUREMENT
OF ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL

by

Cynthia F. Gray

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Signature Deleted

Dr. Bernadine Bolden, Advisor
Signature Deleted

Dr. Bruce Gutknecht, Committee
Signature Deleted

Dr. Cheryl Fountain, Committee
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to develop and validate a survey that would help classroom teachers identify the attitudes toward school of fifth grade students in a classroom setting of approximately thirty students.

The survey was developed from a list of statements suggested by fifth grade students. This list was categorized by a panel of judges to eliminate conflicting or confusing statements. The statements measured three objectives. These were: for the student to believe that attending school is valuable and important; for students to enjoy being at school; and for students to indicate they would choose attending school over other less appropriate activities.

A sample group of 73 students completed the survey. The data were used to compute a reliability coefficient using the formula for coefficient alpha. The reliability coefficient for the survey was .8967 which indicates a reliable instrument.
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Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to develop and validate a survey that would help classroom teachers identify the attitudes toward school of fifth grade students in a classroom setting of approximately thirty students.
Rationale

It is important for all students to have a positive attitude toward being at school and participating in school activities. Students are able to attain more skills and knowledge when they are happy about the situation in which they are placed.

Negative attitudes toward school can be caused by many factors. Some stem from problems that are present in the child's home environment. Parents who show apathy for school tend to cause their children to feel the same apathy. Negative remarks made about the child's teacher in the presence of the child can cause a child to feel negatively toward school. Other family problems can cause a child to wish he/she did not have to be in school.

The factors that stem from the home can often not be adequately controlled in a classroom setting. These problems must be approached indirectly by going through counselors or others involved in youth services.

Self-concept has been related to attitude toward school. Metcalfe (1981) found a significant difference in attitudes toward school of children who held high positive self-concepts compared to those who held low self-concepts.

There are many factors that influence a child's
self-concept. Herb Kohl (1979) believes that inability to succeed is a major cause of low self-concepts in children. He says that if these students are forced to succeed by the teacher giving answers and doing their work for them, their self-concepts will be improved. The teacher should be ready to intervene when apparent failure is about to result. Lunn (1970) found 11-year-olds' self-concepts were significantly related to school achievement.

Another factor related to self-concept is the child's perception of the teacher's attitude toward the child. Metcalfe (1981) cited studies that found pupils to be very aware of their teacher's feelings toward them, and those who perceived the teacher as liking them were holders of more positive self-concepts.

It is important for classroom teachers to be able to identify their students' attitudes toward school. According to Lindermann (1977), attitude research is the essential first step for improving communication. By identifying attitudes, a teacher can work to maintain positive attitudes and to change negative ones.

There is a need for a valid instrument which will measure students' attitudes toward school. With such an instrument the classroom teacher can measure attitudes, work to change the negative ones, then remeasure to see if change has actually occurred. It is the purpose of this study to develop and validate such an instrument.
Review of Related Literature

Due to the recognized importance of attitudes in education, many studies have been conducted that attempt to shed light on what affects attitudes and how attitudes affect other areas.

Attitude usually refers to the full range of impressions a person holds toward a social object (Lindermann, 1977). This includes what the person says (verbal expression), what is known by the person (mental predispositions), what the person feels (emotions), and how the person tends to act (behaviors).

Lewis and Teale (1980) discussed a model similar to the one discussed by Lindermann (1977). This model was developed by Rosenberg, Howland, McGuire, Abelson, and Bent (1960). In their model, however, there were only three basic components to attitude. The cognitive and affective (emotions) components were basically the same while the behavioral component included both what the person says and how the person acts. Studies indicate that all three parts (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) are distinguishable and necessary when measuring attitudes (Triandis, 1971).

Cangelosi (1982) has developed a taxonomy for use in measuring the affective domain. This taxonomy has three main
levels. Level A is "Appreciation Level Behavior". A student shows appreciation when he/she believes something has value. Level B is "Willingness to Act Level Behavior". At this level a student would decide to follow a course of action should the situation arise.

There are two sublevels for level B. The first, B1, is "Willingness to Participate". This is apparent when the student personally takes part in an activity. "Willingness to Advocate", Bii, is the second sublevel and occurs when the student attempts to convince another to be willing to act.

The third main level of Cangelosi's taxonomy for the affective domain is Level C, "Characterization Level Behavior". This characterization occurs when a student has incorporated willingness to act so that it becomes a standard of his/her lifestyle.

Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (1964) devised a classification scheme for the affective domain. There are five main categories to this taxonomy. The levels are hierarchical in order and are arranged along a continuum of internalization from lowest to highest.

The categories and the subdivisions of each are listed below.

1.0 Receiving (attending)
   1.1 Awareness
   1.2 Willingness to receive
   1.3 Controlled or selected attention
2.0 Responding
   2.1 Acquiescence in responding
   2.2 Willingness to respond
2.3 Satisfaction in response
3.0 Valuing
  3.1 Acceptance of value
  3.2 Preference for a value
  3.3 Commitment (conviction)
4.0 Organization
  4.1 Conceptualization of a value
  4.2 Organization of a value system
5.0 Characterization by a value or value complex
  5.1 Generalized set
  5.2 Characterization

1.0 Receiving (Attending) - This is the lowest level in the hierarchy. It indicates that a student is attending to a phenomena. This level ranges from a very passive role on the part of the student to a point where the student directs his/her attention toward the stimuli.

2.0 Responding - Here the student is not just willing to attend, but is actively attending. This level ranges from obedience or compliance to an emotional level of enjoyment.

3.0 Valuing - The student believes that a particular thing has worth. At the lowest level he/she is willing to let himself/herself be perceived as holding a value. At the higher level the student acts to further this impression.

4.0 Organization - At this level the student organizes the values into a system, determines the interrelationship among values, and establishes the dominant and pervasive ones.

5.0 Characterization by a value or value complex - At this level the values have a place in the individual value hierarchy. They have been organized into an internally
consistent system and have controlled the behavior of the student long enough for him/her to have adapted to behaving a certain way.

It is generally accepted that attitude is related to academic achievement and cognitive development (Gordon, 1966; Hough & Piper, 1982; Metcalfe, 1981). Marjoribanks (1976) proposed that at each level of attitude the increases in cognitive ability were related to increases in academic achievement. Marjoribanks also proposed that at each ability level, increases in attitude scores were related to increases in achievement. It was noted that at each level of ability, increases in attitude scores were associated with small-to-moderate increases in academic performance.

Self-concept has been found to be significantly related to school achievement (Lunn, 1970). Metcalfe (1981) found significant differences in attitudes toward school of children who held high positive self-concepts compared to those who held low self-concepts.

A child's self-concept is influenced by what the child perceives the teacher's attitude toward him/her to be. Pupils have been found to be very aware of their teacher's feelings toward them and those who perceived the teacher as liking them held more positive self-concepts. It appears there is a complex relationship between self-concept, attitude toward school, and school achievement.

In a study conducted by Sharples (1969) it was proposed that attitudes would be more favorable to activities
that were stressed in the school curriculum. It was found that pupils in schools which stressed art, mathematics, and physical education did have more positive attitudes toward those subjects. However, a school that stressed development in language activities was found to be producing unfavorable attitudes toward the use of language. It was recommended that further research be done in this area.

There has been much evidence to indicate that differences in attitudes toward school exist between boys and girls (Feather, 1973; Lunn, 1969; Marjoribanks, 1976; Metcalfe, 1981).

Marjoribanks (1976) found evidence to indicate that there was a difference between boys and girls in the nature and strength of the relationships between achievement, ability, and attitudes for each academic subject.

In a study conducted by Feather (1973), boys who identified themselves on a survey gave more favorable responses to classmates and teachers and reported greater happiness with school. Girls who identified themselves on the survey were less favorable to schoolwork and reported less happiness with school.

Metcalfe (1981) found boys with high self-concepts to have more positive attitudes in primary school while girls with high self-concepts were found to have more positive attitudes in secondary school.

It is a sometimes accepted belief that anonymity has a direct influence on the results of attitude surveys.
Because of this belief, surveyors have gone to great lengths to assure anonymity for those completing the survey. Francis (1981) conducted a survey that shows evidence that in some cases anonymity on attitude surveys may not be as important as once believed.

Three hundred ten- and eleven-year old children were given a questionnaire measuring attitude toward religion. There was no significant difference found between children who were assured of anonymity and those who directly identified themselves on the questionnaire.

If a teacher wishes to pretest and posttest individual students' attitudes, it is necessary to identify individuals. There are various ethical questions to be considered should a teacher think of disguising identification in some way.

Feather (1973) conducted an extensive study with 3,000 secondary school students to determine if response anonymity had any effect on an attitude survey. It was determined that anonymity had no significant effect on the rankings of values in regard to their own priorities or those of their school.

There are a number of factors which could cause the significance of anonymity to change from one testing situation to another. Factors such as age, content, sex, and expressed purpose of the survey may play a part.

Due to recent guidelines on ethics, researchers are required to disclose the purpose and content of the study to those persons participating in it. Evidence indicates that there is little effect on cognitive instruments, but there is
an effect on affective instruments (Dolly, 1978).

Another study done by Dolly, Bell, Saunders, and Reynolds (1979) indicates that giving either positive or negative cues before administering an attitude survey can cause an increase in scores.

According to Camp (1979) attitudes are measurable along a continuum. They are held by many people and are common to a group. Attitudes are temporary and changeable. They are subject to rationalization and deception. There are many facets involved in a study on attitude. It is apparent there is a need for much more research in this area.
Development of Instrument

In the development of an attitude survey the first step was to clarify what was being measured by stating the goal. The goal was for students to believe that attending school has value, to enjoy being at school, and to indicate they would choose attending school over other less appropriate activities.

This goal was defined by stating specific learning objectives in the affective domain. The first objective was for students to believe that attending school is valuable and important (II-A)*. This objective was weighted so that 37.5 per cent of the items on the survey were designed to measure it. The second objective was for students to enjoy being at school (II-B-i)*. This objective was weighted 41.67 per cent. The third objective was for students to indicate they would choose attending school over other less appropriate activities (II-B-i)*. The weighting for this objective was 20.83 per cent.

It was determined that objectives one and two should have the heavier weightings because a teacher would find this information most helpful when evaluating a child's

*Cangelosi's taxonomy for the affective domain
attitude in class. Objective three was weighted less because it actually incorporates both objectives one and two.

The next step was to develop an item pool for each objective. This was done by compiling a list of statements which express attitude toward school. The list came from personal experiences and from statements the students suggested which expressed favorable and unfavorable attitudes toward school (Lindermann, 1977).

After the list of statements was compiled, it was submitted to a panel of three judges. This panel was made up of one person from the field of measurement and evaluation, one knowledgeable fifth grade teacher, and one person knowledgeable about the affective domain. The judges categorized the statements as measurements for one of the three objectives. See Appendix A.

Statements which were classified as unacceptable by any of the three judges were discarded or modified. Statements that got conflicting categorizations were also discarded or modified.

The remaining statements were tried out on the students informally. These statements were discussed with students who would not be taking the final form of the survey. Any statements which appeared unclear were modified or discarded.

The final list of statements was put into item form with a yes/no/don't know format. The scoring for statements that referred to positive attitudes was two points for a yes
response, one point for don't know, and zero points for no. The reverse was true when a no response referred to a positive attitude.

Items were then selected from each item pool utilizing a table of specifications and a survey was synthesized. A total of 24 items was on the final form. Nine of the items measured objective one, ten items measured objective two, and five items measured objective three.

**Determination of Reliability**

The survey was administered to a sample group that consisted of three fifth grade classrooms. The three classrooms were from a school that is located in a small town. The students from this school are mostly from middle-income families. All three of the classrooms were heterogeneously grouped according to ability. The sample included 43 boys and 39 girls. Six girls and three boys failed to answer all the questions on the survey so their surveys were not used in determining the reliability coefficient.

The data from the 73 completed surveys were entered into a computer and a reliability coefficient was determined using the formula for coefficient alpha. The reliability coefficient for the surveys was .8967.

**Instrument Validity**

The survey that was administered to the students had relevance built into it. The statements used for the survey were taken from students the same age and locale as the
students who took the survey. The statements were written in a language the students could understand and relate to.

The statements were also referred to a panel of three judges (one in measurement and evaluation, one knowledgeable in the affective domain, and one knowledgeable fifth grade teacher) who helped eliminate any conflicting or confusing statements.

The reliability coefficient obtained (.8967) indicates that the survey is reliable for fifth grade students at this particular school. One could assume that it would also be reliable for other fifth graders in similar situations, however, more testing would be needed.

With evidence of both relevance and reliability, the survey appears to be a valid one.
Conclusions

Attitudes play a large role in a student's success in school. Attitudes have been found to be related to self-concept, academic achievement, and cognitive development. It is important for teachers to have a valid instrument for measuring students' attitudes.

The survey developed in this study makes it possible for fifth grade teachers to measure students' attitudes with an apparently valid instrument. Individual teachers can then develop ways to change negative attitudes and maintain positive ones in their classrooms.
Appendices
Appendix A

Directions to Judges

In an effort to develop an instrument using children's language, two groups of fifth grade students were asked to give statements that expressed feelings for school in three different areas. They were given examples in each area.

Some of the statements they gave have been compiled on the attached sheet. Keep in mind that these statements are written from the viewpoint of a fifth grader.

Please categorize the following statements as to which objective they would be used to measure. Objective one is for students to believe that attending school is valuable and important. Objective two is for students to enjoy being in school. Objective three is for students to indicate they would choose attending school over other less appropriate activities.
Appendix B

1. Going to school will help me get a good job when I am older.
2. School is fun.
3. I wish we didn't have to go to school at all.
4. I would rather stay at home and sleep than go to school.
5. I'd rather go to the doctor or dentist than go to school.
6. I don't like being at school for long hours.
7. Learning new things at school is fun.
8. My school is a nice place to be.
9. In school all we ever do is work, work, work.
10. School will help me know many things.
11. School will help me think better.
12. School will get me prepared for the future.
13. School is just a place where I get in trouble.
14. I think I could learn more on my own than at school.
15. School is a waste of time.
16. School is boring.
17. I don't like school.
18. I like being with my friends at school.
19. I'd rather be at home alone than at school.
20. I like school because it keeps me busy.
21. School is neat.
22. School will help me know what is going on in the world.
23. I like to do school work.
24. I'd rather be outside playing than at school.
25. I enjoy going to school.
26. Going to school will help me be someone special.
27. I hate to do school work.
28. School is stupid.
29. School is like a prison.
30. I will never use what I learn at school.
31. I already know all the things they teach at school.
32. I'd rather be at school than the video game room.
33. I'd rather be at school than at home watching tv.
34. School is good for me.
35. I don't need school to get a job.
36. I'd rather be playing hooky than be at school.
37. I like all the different things we do at school.
38. I need school.
39. School is great.
40. I'd rather be at school than at home sick.
41. School is good for your brain.
42. I never learn anything at school.
43. School gets in the way of play.
44. School stinks.
45. I don't need to go to school since I don't plan to go to college.
46. I like school.
47. School is important for everyone.
48. I will never use what I learn at school.
49. I don’t need an education.
50. I don’t like school because of all the homework.
STUDENT ATTITUDE SURVEY

This is NOT a test and you do not have to put your name on the paper. This is just a way to help us know how all of the students feel about school.

Several students from different classes were asked to tell how they felt about school. Here are some of the things they had to say. If you might say the same thing they said, circle agree. If you would not say what they said, circle disagree. If you are not sure, circle don't know.

1. Going to school will help me get a good job when I am older.
   
   AGREE    DISAGREE    DON'T KNOW

2. School is fun.
   
   AGREE    DISAGREE    DON'T KNOW

3. I wish we didn't have to go to school at all.
   
   AGREE    DISAGREE    DON'T KNOW

4. I would rather stay at home and sleep than go to school.
   
   AGREE    DISAGREE    DON'T KNOW

5. I'd rather go to the doctor or dentist than go to school.
   
   AGREE    DISAGREE    DON'T KNOW

6. Learning new things at school is fun.
   
   AGREE    DISAGREE    DON'T KNOW

7. In school all we ever do is work, work, work.
   
   AGREE    DISAGREE    DON'T KNOW
8. School will help me know many things.
   AGREE  DISAGREE  DON'T KNOW

9. School will help me think better.
   AGREE  DISAGREE  DON'T KNOW

10. School will get me prepared for the future.
    AGREE  DISAGREE  DON'T KNOW

11. School is boring.
    AGREE  DISAGREE  DON'T KNOW

12. I don't like school.
    AGREE  DISAGREE  DON'T KNOW

13. I like to do school work.
    AGREE  DISAGREE  DON'T KNOW

14. I will never use what I learn at school.
    AGREE  DISAGREE  DON'T KNOW

15. School is like a prison.
    AGREE  DISAGREE  DON'T KNOW

16. I'd rather be at school than at the video game room.
    AGREE  DISAGREE  DON'T KNOW

17. I hate to do school work.
    AGREE  DISAGREE  DON'T KNOW

18. I'd rather be at school than at home watching t.v.
    AGREE  DISAGREE  DON'T KNOW

19. I don't need school to get a job.
    AGREE  DISAGREE  DON'T KNOW

20. I like all the different things we do at school.
    AGREE  DISAGREE  DON'T KNOW
21. What I learn at school is good for my brain.
   AGREE    DISAGREE    DON'T KNOW

22. School is important for everyone.
   AGREE    DISAGREE    DON'T KNOW

23. I will never use what I learn at school.
   AGREE    DISAGREE    DON'T KNOW

24. I'd rather be at home alone than at school.
   AGREE    DISAGREE    DON'T KNOW
Appendix D

Please fill out this paper to the best of your ability. Some of the statements you write may be used in the making up of a test to measure attitudes toward school. It is not necessary to put your name on this paper.

Write three or more things someone might say who likes going to school. For example: "School is fun." "I like school."
1. 
2. 
3. 

Write three or more things someone might say who doesn't like going to school. For example: "School is boring." "I don't like school."
1. 
2. 
3. 

Write three or more things someone might say who thinks going to school is important. For example: "Going to school will help me get a good job when I am older."
1. 
2. 
3. 

Write three or more things someone might say who doesn't think going to school is important. For example: "School is a waste of time." "I will never use what I learn at school."
1. 
2. 
3. 

Write three or more places someone might rather be than in school. For example: "I'd rather be at the video game room than at school."
1. 
2. 
3. 

23
Finish this sentence in three or more ways. "I'd rather be at school than..."
1.
2.
3.
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