

Keller F S. "Good-bye, teacher..." *J. Appl. Behav. Anal.* 1:79-89, 1968.
[Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ]

Through the freedom provided by the University of Brasilia and Arizona State University, a student-paced, nonpunitive, and mastery-called-for method of undergraduate instruction was developed and tried out by teachers in Brazil and the US, with early results that indicate the general satisfaction of teachers, students, and assistants, with better learning than that produced by group instruction through the lecture method. (The SSC[®] indicates that this paper has been cited in over 400 publications.)

Early Days of "Personalized Instruction"

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My first reaction to the request for a commentary on "Good-bye, teacher..." was to read that article again. This led, in turn, to some embarrassment on two counts: (1) I find that, since I wrote it, I have repeated myself many, many times, unconsciously on numerous occasions; and (2) I didn't give sufficient credit in the paper to three colleagues for their part in the origination of the teaching system I described—namely, to J. Gilmour Sherman, my former lab assistant and colleague at Columbia University; to Rodolfo Azzi, my assistente at the University of São Paulo; and to Carolina Martuscelli Bori, my colleague at that institution who, like Rodolfo, attended my classes there in 1961 and later headed the Department of Psychology at the University of Brasilia, where our system first took shape in 1964. Which one of us contributed what in the brainstorming session that we held in 1963, wherein the main ideas of the system were expressed, it is impossible to assert—as difficult to measure as was the role of the University of Brasilia in granting us the freedom to put the system into operation at every level of instruction in our field.

In the years that have elapsed since the temporary shutdown of that university in 1965, with the dispersion of our group in various directions, I have learned what other promoters of wide-

spread change must have learned before me: The intrinsic virtues of a method are less important than the implications of its general adoption. I have discovered that the changes called for in the schoolhouse by our plan are too many and too great for its acceptance. How many schools and colleges in our land would permit the individual student to progress at his or her own pace, with a mastery requirement at each step, without penalty for failures, and with full credit for final dominance of the subject matter that the teacher had avowed would constitute success?

Three other papers of similar content to that of "Good-bye, teacher..." were published prior to 1968: a German translation of a talk that I delivered in Chicago at a meeting of the American Psychological Association;¹ a Latin-American publication (in English) of one I gave in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at a meeting of the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association;² and another to the American Conference of Academic Deans at Los Angeles in 1967.³ Each publication was requested, as was "Good-bye, teacher..." but none of them was widely cited (to my knowledge) or led to many calls for reprints. The same thing can be said of my relevant papers since then.

From a career of laboratory research in animal behavior, up to the time of my retirement (1964), I became an educator, and am so regarded today.

Within this latter period, I received two awards, three plaques, two medals, and two honorary degrees, all of which can be traced, I think, to my early paper and its follow-ups. In addition I was asked to represent the system in countless educational settings. In 1971 alone, my diary tells me, there were 34 such invitations from 14 different states and four other countries than my own.

The Brasilia plan came to be known as a personalized system of instruction (PSI). Many reputed applications of it were really something like it (SLI), and a few were NLI! Some of the better ones may carry other names, or none at all—as described in the *Japan Times* of Tokyo on June 6, 1988.⁴

1. Keller F. Neue Verstärkungsmöglichkeiten im Klassenunterricht (New reinforcement possibilities in class instruction). (Correll W, ed.) *Zur Theorie und Praxis des Programmierten programmierten Lernens* (Theory and practice of programmed learning). Darmstadt, FRG: Wissenschaftlichen Buchgesellschaft, 1969. p. 124-32.
2. Engineering personalized instruction in the classroom. *Rev. Interamer. Psicol.* 1:189-97, 1967.
3. Neglected rewards in the educational process. *Proceedings of the 23rd Annual Meeting of the American Conference of Academic Deans*, Los Angeles, CA, 16 January 1967. p. 9-22. (Cited 20 times.)
4. Stolz(Tomiyasu) S. Personal communication. 10 June 1988.