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Description and definition A brief description and definition of TEACCH can be found in (“ TEACCH Autism Program”, 2017):” The TEACCH® Autism Program is a clinical, training, and research program based at the University of North Carolina. TEACCH, developed by Drs. Eric Schopler and Robert Reichler in the 1960s, was established as a state-wide program by the North Carolina legislature in 1972, and has become a model for other programs around the world. TEACCH developed the intervention approach called “ Structured TEACCHing”, an array of teaching or treatment principles and strategies based on the learning characteristics of individuals with ASD, including strengths in visual information processing, and difficulties with social communication, attention, and executive function.

In response to this profile of strengths and challenges, Structured TEACCHing includes:

- External organizational supports to address challenges with attention and executive function
- Visual and/or written information to supplement verbal communication
- Structured support for social communication

Another definition from (“ TEACCH”, 2017) states:” The TEACCH intervention focuses on strengthening these weaknesses in order to realize the primary goal of reaching the individual’s maximum ability by the time he/she reaches the adult age and for he/she to be an independent member of the community. The TEACCH method does not follow the standard method of curricula, but instead focuses on developing the specific language, social, and adaptive skills. The TEACCH intervention implements an approach known as “ structured teaching”, which “ increases the learning of new skills but also serves to increase independence and self-esteem, reducing behaviour problems that result from confusion, anxiety, and over-

stimulation.” The four main components of the structured teaching process are:

- Physical organization: Physical structure refers to the arrangement of the classroom or teaching environment.

- Scheduling: Scheduling helps individuals on the autism spectrum who have difficulties with sequential memory and organization of time.
- Work Systems: Work systems help teach independent behaviour, organization, and task completion.
- Task organization: Tasks should be organized and presented to students in ways that they can understand. “ TEACCH’s definition of improving quality of lifeThe TEACCH approach is called ” Structured Teaching. The essential mechanisms of Structured Teaching are:”(a) structuring the environment and activities in ways that are understandable to the individual(b) using individuals’ relative strengths in visual skills and interest in visual details to supplement relatively weaker skills(c) using individuals’ special interests to engage them in learning(d) supporting self-initiated use of meaningful communication”(Mesibov & Shea, 2009, p.

3)The applied components of structured teaching are:

- Physical organizationThis means the physical classroom/space that TEACCH is being carried out. The effective layout of TEACCH means that the children with autism can see clear boundaries and divisions. As such, they will not get confused or stressed easily, thus avoiding meltdowns.
- Individualized schedulesEach child will have their own individual schedule that show them what is going to happen for the day, via visual aids. They are shown from top to bottom in a sequence, and hence keeping the schedule predictable.

It also helps in communicating with the child more effectively, since children with autism fare poorer in communication and comprehension skills. • Work systems The work system is setup by the teacher with the 4 main questions in mind: 1. “ What task or activity is the learner supposed to engage in? 2.

How much work (or how many tasks) is required during the specific work period or how long will the activity last? 3. How will the person know that progress is being made and that the activity is finished? 4. What happens next after the work or activity is completed?”(Mesibov, 2006, pp. 43-44)With these simple 4 questions, teachers will now be able to come up with a work system that is catered to each individual child – and that no 2 children will receive the exact same work systems – as each child will have individual needs. The tasks can be in forms of manipulatives, worksheets, puzzles, games – tasks that the child need to finish before they can move on to the next one. • Visual structure of materials in tasks and activities; I, e, task organization The use of the visual support in all stages of TEACCH ensure that the child can transit smoothly from one activity to another.

It also helps them to comprehend what is required of them; and understanding that there are rules in place that they have to follow. With the above components and approach of structured teaching in mind, it would be beneficial for children with autism to achieve: • Independence Many a times, parents of children with special needs will worry about the future of their child – and their ability to survive in the world when parents have passed on. Most parents worry about their child’s independence (and the lack of); and the life skills that each child with special needs have to learn. The main core emphasis of TEACCH is to ensure that the child follows a structured routine <https://assignbuster.com/description-or-teaching-environment-scheduling-scheduling-helps/>

in learning. This in turn builds up self-esteem and independence – which is what most parents are hoping for to inculcate in their child. • Lesser meltdowns Children with autism are often faced with restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interest or activities. Meltdowns and tantrums are often displayed when they cannot cope with change or are resistant to changes. In ensuring that the structured learning of TEACCH is in place, children with autism will be more likely be aware of what to do next, thus reducing the potential risk of a meltdowns or tantrums due to the inability or inflexibility to cope with change.

- Better communication and social skills Children with autism have core deficit with their social communication and social interaction. This impacts their social emotional reciprocity, nonverbal communication behaviours, and relationships with others. In the TEACCH program, children with autism are encouraged to make use of the visual aid or label to associate objects with spoken word.

Along the way as they progressed, they are then offered choices, as an expanded move in alongside in using the visual aid. This will in turn create the opportunity for expressive communication. The “ availability of choices visually clear helps to move the individual toward initiating choices rather than becoming dependent on prompting” (Mesibov & Shea, 2009, p.

- 5) • Visual support Children with autism work well with visual support/aid because it is the most concrete and direct form of information for them.

These visual schedules can help children with ASD in becoming independent of adult prompts and cues. For a child with autism who does not understand nuances in language and communication; it will not be as easy for him/her to <https://assignbuster.com/description-or-teaching-environment-scheduling-scheduling-helps/>

understand instructions via spoken instructions (auditory) or action (kinaesthetic), as when compare to pictorial aid (visual). Note: it is to said that children with autism are highly visual learners but there has been research over the years to refute this statement. (“ Are children with autism really visual learners?”, 2017) Therefore, I will instead refer children with ASD to be more comfortable to use visual support/aid (i.

e being concrete and direct concepts), than be a “ visual learner “. Research behind TEACCHBack in 1960’ and 1970’s, the common belief was that the cause of autism in children were brought on by parenting errors. The relationship between children and parents – how each child was being parented – played a pivotal role in children’s mental health. In summary, the blame for autism was onto the parents. Eric Schopler was a graduate student at the University of Chicago when he realised that children with autism was never an illness brought on by unconscious parenting – parents who were cold and hostile. They were in fact “ impaired ways of experiencing the world and understanding that experience” (Mesibov, Shea & Schopler, 2006).

He then started to research and prove that “ autism was not primarily a disorder of emotions, but a disorder of processing sensory information affecting smell, taste, hearing, vision, and pain sensation” (Mesibov, Shea & Schopler, 2006, p. 2). After several research and analyses later, he determined that education was the “ main venue for change and improvement” (Mesibov, Shea & Schopler, 2006, p. 3). Together with Robert Reichler, they started to apply their observations about how children with autism learn and interact with the world, to shape an educational classroom practice that would benefit these children. They developed formal evaluation <https://assignbuster.com/description-or-teaching-environment-scheduling-scheduling-helps/>

tools, and “ preferred behaviour management techniques for parents and professionals” (Mesibov, Shea & Schopler, 2006, p. 9).

The TEACCH program was then founded in 1972, which also a state law was passed to mandate the program. Children with autism were also mandated by the same law to attend public schools. In the early 1980’s, Gary B.

Mesibov was invited onboard to further the technique that was developed, for adult services – since the initial group of children that they worked with were now grown up and reaching adulthood. Gary B. Mesibov further refined the program and the numerous training camps that were held throughout the next many years. Critical thinking and evaluation of research One of the key component of TEACCH is the work system, where children with autism work from left to right on the tasks that they need to complete.

They also have to match visual symbols to ensure that they follow a structured set of tasks in sequence. It may sound very simple for a neurotypical child but it is infact not easy for children with autism. They lack such skills and the work system seemed to work well for them, based on the available research published. (eg Hume and Odom (2007), Hume and Reynolds (2010)). In further evaluating the work system, we can see from evidence based research that not only kids work on tasks or academics, the way to work left to right plays an important part in their life.

It teaches them directional signs, and familiarized themselves with the world that many things in life are from left to right (eg books, signboards). Also, to further evaluate the positive impact on matching visual symbols to their tasks, one can observe that below skills can be  
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cultivated:

- Independence Independence can be built from the simple act of completing task in the work system. The supervision or scaffolding can then be significantly reduced.
- Engagement With the right visual support and tools; and ensuring the tasks provided are short enough, children with autism are engaged throughout to complete the tasks they are required of them.
- Task completion and accuracy With the single action of matching, be it physically matching via an action, or mentally matching via looking at visual aids; it reduces the rate or error and encourage accuracy. When there is engagement and accuracy, task will get completed easier than usual.

- On task behaviour The child with autism have clear and upfront sequence of what to do next; and this helps to reduce any anxiety, stress, inflexibility, and resistance to complete the task. This in turn encourage good on task behaviour.
- Hand eye coordination The basic act of matching encourages good hand eye coordination which can translate to better overall movement for the child with autism. Overall, the TEACCH program cultivates improved adaption; which in turn guides the child with autism to be more flexible than being rigid.

Apart from the student himself/herself, the effectiveness of TEACCH is also dependent on other factors like environment, teacher (and teacher's support). These are the 2 variables that may change the effectiveness of the TEACCH program. Most of the time teachers would want to ensure that they child completes the task by offering them work that related to subject of interest. This may be a good approach to ensure that the child stays engaged, but in some cases, it reinforces the child's rigidity in their interest of object. Of course, the teacher will try to steer the child away gradually (i. <https://assignbuster.com/description-or-teaching-environment-scheduling-scheduling-helps/>



e. fade away), but this may not be applicable to some children with autism who simply refuse to do anything else other than being focused on his/her object of interest. Future directions TEACCH has been expanded to tailor the program to adults with autism.

However, I feel that this may somewhat be limited when it comes to adulthood. The demands of social & communication increases manifolds in adulthood; as compared to childhood. Is the TEACCH program effective for adults in the real world? More research and studies need to be carried out to ascertain it's effectiveness. For sure, TEACCH can never be a single source of strategy to assist the adult with autism in real life.

It must be coupled with other strategies and/or programs to ensure that the adult receives the right help. The recommendation of TEACCH program is for children with autism to start young i. e. from toddler age onwards. This is an ideal situation where the child with autism will start slow but steady on the TEACCH program to learn the skills that we have discussed in the previous section.

However, what is the effectiveness of the program if this is given to an adult with autism for the first time? Will the rate of effectiveness be affected by the target age group? I think more research is required in this area to explore the possible scenarios and the outcome. However, in overall, one cannot dismiss the effectiveness of TEACCH program in many schools around the world. The cost is low; easy to setup and implement; and does not need to adhere to specific set of worksheets that must be purchased in order to use the program. Children on TEACCH program will benefit from the long

team structured teaching; and this can ingrain into their life, to pass this structured routine onto other parts of their life – as long as this can be supported effectively by the professionals, teachers, and parents.