

A photograph of a person with long hair, wearing a dark jacket and blue pants, sitting in a field of tall, dry, golden-brown grass. The person is looking down at their hands, which are holding a small green object. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with more grass and a hint of a hillside.

Freddie W. Litton

**EDUCATION OF
THE TRAINABLE
MENTALLY RETARDED**

curriculum, methods, materials

Education of the trainable mentally retarded

CURRICULUM, METHODS, MATERIALS

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with 122 illustrations



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Education of the trainable mentally retarded

CURRICULUM, METHODS, MATERIALS

RETARDED CHILD

Thomas S. Fee

Years past,
retarded child,
prejudice and ignorance
of men's minds
clouded his vision
and you
were hidden,
shunned,
neglected,
and forgotten.

Slowly
the light of knowledge
began to penetrate the darkness
to light the way
and dissolve
misconceptions,
misunderstanding,
and fear.

Years past,
retarded child,
your difficulty in handling
the abstractions and demands
of the academic world
led you along the path
of failure,
frustration,
and rejection.

Now—
you find yourself
in special classes
designed to fit
your abilities,
needs,
and interests—
or you find yourself
in community training centers

Which help prepare you
for a significant contribution
to your fellow man.

You child,
smiling up at me
with affection and trust,
have we done enough?

Reprinted with permission from The Pointer, Winter, 1969.

To
Jeremy, Jennifer, and Stephen

PREFACE

Education of the Trainable Mentally Retarded: Curriculum, Methods, Materials is designed primarily for teachers in training who are enrolled in a university or in-service course on curriculum or methods and materials for teaching the trainable mentally retarded. The text can also be used as a resource book for those allied professionals (social workers, speech pathologists, rehabilitation specialists, counselors, physicians, etc.) who have contact with TMRs and their families and wish to expand their understanding and knowledge of the educator's delivery-of-service role.

Section one, Foundations, is intended to present basic information on the TMR and to establish a philosophy for the education of TMRs. This philosophy is a humanistic, reality based, pragmatic, behavioristic approach that allows implementation and optimal achievement of the desired skills of the curriculum section. Chapter 1 on the nature and cause of mental retardation provides current, basic information on educational philosophy, the multidisciplinary approach, definition, classification, and prevalence, characteristics, causes, and diagnosis. Chapter 2 on the educational, environmental, and instructional concerns

covers curriculum goals, objectives, and content, instructional personnel (including the role of parents), organizational and administrative considerations, equipment, materials, and use of games, general principles of instruction, and individual education programs. Chapter 3 on behavior modification and the TMR discusses procedures to establish appropriate behaviors and eliminate inappropriate behaviors, and generalization.

Section two, Curriculum, contains seven chapters, each paralleling basic curriculum areas for the TMR. These chapters are concerned with developing self-care skills, basic communication skills, social skills, perceptual-motor and physical education skills, functional academic skills, recreation and leisure time skills, as well as economic usefulness and vocational skills. Each of these chapters discusses research findings relative to the TMR, general development of the curriculum area, assessment, behaviors or skills to develop, teaching considerations and procedures, activities, materials, and teacher resources.

Also included in the text are four practitioner-related appendixes: Appendix A lists publishers of tests, materials, and equipment for the TMR; Appendix B con-

tains a directory of agencies, professional organizations, and publications contributing to the education and training of TMRs; Appendix C provides forms for teachers and administrators of programs for TMRs (emergency information card, parental consent or release forms, medical examination form, job analysis form, and checklist for program quality); and Appendix D is the *Litton-TMR Behavioral Assessment Checklist*, useful for a determination of behavioral functioning and growth in the seven basic curriculum areas.

After classroom teaching experience with the trainable mentally retarded, university teaching of undergraduate and graduate students in teacher training programs for the retarded, and conducting numerous workshops on teaching TMRs, I have recognized, as have many others, a critical need for a book that transposes scientific and theoretical aspects of teaching the retarded into a practical, consumable form. It is my sincere desire that *Education of the Trainable Mentally Retarded: Curriculum, Methods, Materials* offer a realistic, comprehen-

sive approach to instruction yet not be restrictive nor stereotype TMR individuals. I have also attempted to incorporate and share current research and programmatic efforts taking place across the United States.

An undertaking of this nature must rely on assistance from a number of individuals. Acknowledgment and heartfelt appreciation are extended to those persons who contributed information and personal time to the text: Mollie Alarcon, Charlotte Ducote, Judy Stuart, Kathy Mix, Cliff Ouder, Jr., and many teachers and principals of schools for the TMR in the New Orleans area. Special thanks are due Dr. Jane Murdock for writing Chapter 3 on behavior modification and to Dr. Francis St. Peter and Betty James for securing photographs for the text. Appreciation is also extended to the typists of the manuscript, Jeannie Shapley and Deborah Casey, who were forced into impossible deadlines. I reserve the last thank you for my understanding and loving wife, Beverly, who endured along with me.

Freddie W. Litton

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SECTION ONE

FOUNDATIONS

The purposes of this section are threefold. It is intended to serve as a review of general but current and relevant information on retardation, with emphasis on philosophy, the multidisciplinary approach, definition, classification and prevalence, characteristics, causes, and diagnosis (intellectual and behavioral). It is also an in-depth description of educational environmental constructs for the trainable mentally retarded, including such aspects as curriculum goals, objectives and content, instructional personnel (including parents), organizational and administrative considerations, equipment and materials, and basic principles for instruction. Finally, it introduces the reader to a basic knowledge and understanding of the most viable approach to establishing appropriate and eliminating undesirable behaviors in the education and development of the trainable mentally retarded. This approach is applied behavior analysis or behavior modification.

CHAPTER 1

NATURE AND CAUSE OF MENTAL RETARDATION

The major purposes of this chapter will be to discuss the provision of services to the trainable mentally retarded (TMR) from a philosophical point of reference, to examine the disciplines that contribute to diagnosis, prevention, treatment, and management of retardation, and to present basic information on the definition, classification, prevalence, characteristics, and causes of mental retardation. Diagnosis, with specific emphasis on intelligence testing and assessment of adaptive behavior, will also be discussed.

PHILOSOPHY

Every business, agency, organization, or profession must have a basic philosophy on which to center its operations and functions. The United States of America and its system of education also have operating philosophies and beliefs. Our founding fathers declared in the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, that "all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." These rights cannot be denied any residents of the United States. The rights of individuals with respect to education are also guaranteed. American education holds the belief

that "all men are created equal" before the law and therefore have equal rights to an education, even though they do not have equal abilities to learn.

Forty-eight of the states value education to the extent that school attendance by youth is compulsory, and parents who fail to comply face criminal action. These laws reflect almost without question that education is essential to normal life in American society. The Supreme Court, in a 1954 ruling (*Brown v. the Board of Education*), stated: "In these days it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms."*

Although the first public school class for the mentally retarded was established in 1896, almost all school systems prior to the 1950s and most after 1950 chose to ignore this aspect of the population. These school systems and administrators held the belief that the TMR child, because of limited abilities and potential, would not return society's investment. In denying these

*From *Brown v. the Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483, 74 S. Ct. 686 (1954).

individuals educational services, they denied the retarded citizen basic rights guaranteed by the Constitution. The two major cases that have clearly established the right of free access to public education for the TMR are *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971) and *Mills v. the Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972). In the *Pennsylvania* case a federal district court entered a consent decree that Pennsylvania's public schools were to stop excluding children because of their mental retardation. Furthermore, if a school district wished to place a child in a special class or school, parents had to be notified prior to the change. In the *Mills* case a federal court ruled that the Constitution requires that every child, including the retarded, has a right to an educational program that will meet his individual needs and develop him to his fullest potential.

Presently it is the belief of most professionals in the field of mental retardation that the retarded should have the fundamental rights, freedoms, and privileges granted other citizens. This belief is reflected in the United States by the President's Committee on Mental Retardation (PCMR, 1971) and on an international scale by the United Nations' adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons in 1971. The PCMR listed the general rights of the retarded to include training, medical treatment, psychiatric treatment, insurance, privacy, and marriage. Also included were the right not to be experimented on in institutions and the right not to be sterilized. The articles of the United Nations declaration follow:

**United Nations Declaration of the Rights
of Mentally Retarded Persons**

- Article I The mentally retarded person has, to the maximum degree of feasibility, the same rights as other human beings.
- Article II The mentally retarded person has a right to proper medical care and physical therapy, and to such education, training, rehabilitation, and guidance as will enable him to develop his ability and maximum potential.

Article III The mentally retarded person has a right to economic security and to a decent standard of living. He has a right to perform productive work or to engage in any other meaningful occupation to the fullest possible extent of his capabilities.

Article IV Whenever possible, the mentally retarded person should live with his own family or with foster parents and participate in different forms of community life. The family with which he lives should receive assistance. If care in an institution becomes necessary, it should be provided in surroundings and other circumstances as close as possible to those of normal life.

Article V The mentally retarded person has a right to a qualified guardian when this is required to protect his personal well-being and interests.

Article VI The mentally retarded person has a right to protection from exploitation, abuse, and degrading treatment. If prosecuted for any offense, he shall have a right to due process of law with full recognition being given to his degree of mental responsibility.

Article VII Whenever mentally retarded persons are unable, because of the severity of their handicap, to exercise all their rights in a meaningful way, or it should become necessary to restrict or deny some or all of their rights, the procedure used for that restriction or denial of rights must contain proper legal safeguards against every form of abuse. This procedure must be based on an evaluation of the social capability of the mentally retarded person by qualified experts and must be subject to periodic review and to the right of appeal to higher authorities.

Inherent in the article's philosophy is found the principle of *normalization* (Nijre, 1969; Wolfensberger, 1972). This notion had its beginnings in the Scandinavian countries and has recently enjoyed widespread acceptance in the United States. Normalization consists of offering experiences to mentally retarded individuals that will enable them to live as much as possible like the rest of society. Included are vocational, recreational, social, and educational activities and opportunities. This book has as its philosophy the same prin-