

THE TOMATIS PROGRAM

AND THE PROFOUNDLY MENTALLY RETARDED CHILD

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In this study mental retardation was conceived as a form of perceptual deprivation. Thus the objective of remedial programs had to be a correction of the reigning state of perceptual deprivation.

Against this background, the present study was conducted to investigate the effect of the Tomatis Listening Training with a group of profoundly retarded children at the Witrand Care and Rehabilitation Centre.

A secondary objective was to inquire into intervention as a contaminating factor.

Psychological tests utilized included the Bailey Scales of Infant Development and a measure of responsiveness.

Three groups of experimental subjects were used in the research design. Ten subjects were allocated to each group.

The three groups respectively received:

- auditory training plus a sensory-motor stimulation program;
- stimulation with unfiltered music, together with a sensory-motor stimulation program;
- no specific stimulation program.

Thus ten experimental subjects were exposed to filtered Mozart music through head phones, whilst a second group of ten subjects listened to unfiltered recordings of Mozart music.

Both these groups received a sensory-motor stimulation program in order to insure that the remedial intervention strategy between the two groups was kept uniform.

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No aimed stimulation whatsoever was directed at the third group.

RESULTS:

1. Increase in mental age

Both groups A and B manifested an increase in mental age. However, the increase in mental age in group A was significantly higher than the increase in group B. Thus, it was concluded that the combined effect of Tomatis training as well as sensory-motor training had resulted in a statistically significant increase in mental age.

2. Changes in responsiveness

Whereas no significant differences in terms of responsiveness in group A and B were observed prior to the stimulation program, a statistically significant change occurred in group A. A statistically significant reduction of self-directed responses occurred, together with a significant increase in object-directed responses. In group B, no significant change took place in this regard.

In conclusion, the results indicated that the Tomatis program had led to an increase in the level of functioning of profoundly mentally retarded subjects, since mental age scores had increased, and since the subjects' attitude toward stimuli, had changed from passivity toward active participation.