



TRAINING PARENTS OF RETARDED CHILDREN,
IN THE USE OF BEHAVIOURAL TECHNIQUES
- AN EVALUATION

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Summary

The present study evaluated the utility of the parent-training workshops presently being used by the Family Training Unit, an educational resource branch of the Intellectually Retarded Services.

The evaluation made use of two parent training groups, and the final number of parents involved was fourteen. The parents' ages ranged from early twenties to over fifty; and they had various educational backgrounds. Their children varied in the degree of retardation, and their ages ranged from 3 years to 8 years 6 months.

The workshops, (an average of 10, two hour sessions) concentrated on teaching the parents how to teach their children new skills and thus the parents all worked on individual programmes with their children. While one couple used the information gained from the workshop to deal with a behaviour problem, in the other 7 families the target was skill acquisition.

The evaluation involved both "objective" pre-workshop and post workshop measures of assessment (through the use of home-based video recordings) as well as the parents' subjective opinions of the use of the workshop and their children's improvement. Each parent also filled in a pre and post Parent Attitude inventory to examine any attitude changes.

These measures enabled an individual success rating for each parent and child, as well as an overall group evaluation. Results indicated that the parents all increased their teaching skills to various degrees, and some parents showed an ability to generalise these skills to other teaching situations. Discrepancies between

objective and subjective measures of success illustrated the necessity of multiple measures of assessment, and led to discussion of what aspects of the course were most useful to the parents.

The varying successes of the parents also enabled the determination of possible predictors of success. It seemed that the parent's level of education, degree of motivation and child's degree of retardation affected the parents' ability to learn and use the skills. Practical suggestions to foster success in all parents, regarding course content and structure were made in the light of these findings.

Finally, the methodological problems of this applied research study were discussed, along with an outline of the needed areas of future research.

To the author's knowledge this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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