PAPER 307

THE LONGITUDINAL EFFECTS OF THE MIU CURRICULUM ON INTELLIGENCE AND FIELD INDEPENDENCE

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Increases in intelligence and field independence were found in students practising the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programme at Maharishi International University. —EDITORS

This study was designed to replicate and extend earlier results on the longitudinal effects of the Maharishi International University (MIU) curriculum at the undergraduate level. The MIU curriculum includes participation in the Maharishi Technology of the Unified Field, an integral part of which is the practice of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program.

Previous research (Aron, Orme-Johnson, and Brubaker, 1981) found that among the 15 students who entered MIU in its first undergraduate semester in 1973 and were available for retesting at the time of graduation four years later, a significant IQ increase of eight points was found from freshman to senior year using the Cattell Culture Fair Intelligence Test. In addition, positive personality changes were found among the same sample using the California Personality Inventory. The present study replicated this design using the same intelligence measure with a larger sample of students. This study also extended the previous work by including a test of field independence, a cognitive style variable indicative of the degree to which subjects can maintain a stable internal frame of reference in the presence of distracting stimuli. More broadly, field independence is viewed as an expression of increased psychological differentiation, a developmental process underlying the ability to utilize one's own internal frame of reference for comprehension of the perceptual and social environment (Witkin, Dyk, Faterson, Goodenough, and Karp, 1974).

The Cattell Culture Fair Intelligence Test (CFIT), Form B, and the Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT), were administered to the graduating class of MIU undergraduates in May, 1984. Pretest scores were available from a previous testing in the period 1979 – 1981, with some differences in the length of academic program due to transfer students or students changing majors. The total number in both testings was 29 for the CFIT and 50 for the GEFT.

The MIU students displayed longitudinal increases in both intelligence and field independence. An increase of nine IQ points was found on the CFIT, from an initial mean of 116.0 (S.D. = 10.2) to a mean of 125.1 (S.D. = 12.6), t(28) = 4.11, p < .001. The GEFT scale also showed a highly significant change, from an initial mean of 13.5 (S.D. = 4.6) to a mean of 15.2 (S.D. = 3.9) on an 18 point scale, t(49) = 3.22, p < .005.

These results indicate that the integrated system of education at Maharishi International University, incorporating both the objective approach of the academic disciplines and the subjective approach included in the Maharishi Technology of the Unified Field, reliably enhances cognitive functioning of students. These findings contrast strongly with previous research, which indicates that performance on these two tests does not increase after age 18 (Barton, 1973; Witkin et al., 1974). The development found among MIU students offers the possibility for educational systems to add to the systematic procedures for the presentation of information a technology which systematically develops the students’ ability to use information effectively.
FIG. 1. INCREASED IQ AMONG MAHARISHI INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OVER A FOUR-YEAR PERIOD AS MEASURED BY THE CATTELL CULTURE FAIR INTELLIGENCE TEST

FIG. 2. INCREASED FIELD INDEPENDENCE AMONG MAHARISHI INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OVER A FOUR-YEAR PERIOD AS MEASURED BY THE GROUP EMBEDDED FIGURES TEST

REFERENCES

