

Professor Michael Tobin

Emeritus Professor of Special Education (Visual Impairment).

School of Education

Contact details

School of Education
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston, Birmingham
B15 2TT, United Kingdom

About

Despite retirement at age 67 in 2001, he has maintained his interest and research in the educational and psychological development of blind and partially sighted people, especially children and adolescents. He is currently re-examining the mass of data gathered on a group of 120 visually impaired children who were aged 5 at the beginning of the research in 1972.

He has also carried out in retirement an investigation into the rumoured above-average intelligence of children and people blind from early childhood cancer of the eye.

Qualifications

- DLit(Ed)(London)
- PhD (Birmingham)
- BA(Hons) (London)
- PGCE(London)
- Chartered Psychologist
- Fellow of the British Psychological Society.

Biography

After spells in the Civil Service and teaching, he was appointed as a lecturer in 1965 in the National Centre for Programmed Learning in what was then the Educational Psychology Division in Birmingham University's Education Department. Following research with students on the Advanced Diploma Course for teachers wishing to specialise in the education of visually impaired (VI) learners, he was appointed in 1972 as the Theodor Tylor Lecturer and Director of the Research Centre for the Education of the Visually Handicapped. Over the ensuing years he directed teams of researchers concerned with, among other activities, improving visual perception/efficiency skills in young VI learners, the devising of assessment procedures for print and braille reading, the application of computer technology, the establishment of a distance teaching programme for students wishing to specialise in the education of VI learners, and his own particular concern the educational and psychological development of a group of blind and partially sighted children through a unique longitudinal investigation. His work was recognised by the award by the International Braille Research Center in the United States of the Louis Braille Gold Medal for his research into the Braille Code and the teaching of Braille; his work was then acknowledged in the UK with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Royal National Institute of Blind People.

In addition to his research, he taught and supervised B.Ed, M.Ed, and PhD students at Birmingham, and acted as external examiner at M.Ed and Phd level in the UK and abroad. He is the author and co-author of over 100 papers, books, chapters in books, and papers on aspects of visual impairment education and rehabilitation delivered at international conference proceedings. He did two 'stints' as editor and co-editor of the British J. of Visual Impairment and served on the Editorial Boards of other journals.

He has served on national advisory committees, and on regional and local governing bodies of colleges and schools for the V. I. including the Chairmanship of Birmingham's Queen Alexandra College (a College of Further Education for VI students). In his retirement, he has served until recently on the Governing Board of Worcester New College for VI students and during this so-called retirement, he continues to publish in academic and professional journals.

He believes life is really too short for retirement; his continuing research activities, his friends, his family and eight grandchildren occupy the time more than adequately.

Publications

Publications since retirement include:

Tobin, M. and Hill, E. (under review). The development of reading skills in partially sighted learners.

Tobin, M. and Hill, E. (2012). Looking back in time: starting school in the 1970s. *INSIGHT*, 37,28-30.

Tobin, M. and Hill, E. (2011) Issues in the educational and psychological assessment of visually impaired children. *British Journal of Visual Impairment*, 29, 1. 208-214.

Tobin, M. (2011) Is research necessary? *The Educator*, XXIII, 2,20-25.

Tobin, M., Hill, E. and Hill, J. (2010) Retinoblastoma and superior verbal IQ scores? *British Journal of Visual Impairment*, 28,1, 7-18.

Tobin, M. (2008) Information: a new paradigm for research into our understanding of blindness. *British Journal of Visual Impairment*, 26, 2,119-127.

Douglas, G., Grimley, M., Hill, E., Long, R. and Tobin, M. (2002) The use of NARA for assessing the reading ability of children with low vision. *The British Journal of Visual Impairment*, 20, 2, 68-75.

