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An anthology of facts and informed opinion by leading educationists and psychologists, valuable for those who are interested in the education of the gifted child: [Review of the book Educating the gifted: A book of readings edited by Joseph L. French (New York: Holt)]

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BOOKS REVIEWED

An anthology of facts and informed opinion by leading educationists and psychologists, valuable for those who are interested in the education of the gifted child.



Educating the Gifted, a book of readings, edited by Joseph L. French, University of Missouri. (Holt-Dryden).

The first intelligence tests constructed during the last century by Binet and Simon were designed to sort out normal and feeble-minded children. From that time to the present day, facilities for educating the sub-normal child, although still insufficient, have increased and been improved after much research. What about the child at the other end of the intelligence scale, the gifted child? The attitude of a well-known South African educationist is typical of that of many. "No special classes or schools, or enrichment of the programme are needed for the intelligent child, for he will always manage to hold his own.' A little later he added, "besides intelligence is not everything. It is often the child with less intellectual ability but a stronger character that succeeds in life." No amount of reasoning would convince him that the boredom and frustration of the highly intelligent pupil, his habit of working at half-steam to keep down with the others, accounts very often for his lack of drive and perseverance.

It was felt till recently in America that it was undemocratic to group the gifted in special schools, that it would lead to snobbishness and class-distinction if these children had the special privilege of special education. There have of course been schools and classes to cater for a few of the very superior children, but the vast majority of children with above average intelligence were not being educated to their full capacity. In Russia those of superior intelligence receive more than and different teaching from those of average ability and they are inspired to work to their full capacity and to pass the tough examinations well for ". . . ahead looms a professional career which is highly attractive, combining excellent salary with much honour, prestige, and respect. Teachers, for example, are well paid and highly regarded." (Rear Admiral Rickover, U.S. Atomic Energy Commission). Now that Russia is more advanced technologically than America, the latter is doing all she can to use the potential of her gifted children.

The articles edited by Joseph L. French were written by fifty different American educationists, but there are certain main trends and themes running through them.

Firstly as regards the undemocratic idea of special education, the gifted child has been regarded as somewhat of a freak, stunted physically with a personality regarded with suspicion by the public. Terman has proved that the gifted child is often healthier and bigger than average and better adjusted socially. As Sydney Pressey of Ohio University has pointed out, no one regards it as undemocratic that the physically handicapped, spastic or mentally handicapped receive special instruction. The child who is outstanding in the field of athletics or music receives special education, praise and acclaim and no one grudges him his extra coaching. A school for the gifted should not mean class distinction, as pupils will come from many economic and social levels, and they will thus mix with others whose parents form a cross-section of the community.

It is important to define and identify the gifted child early. Although all are agreed that intelligence is not enough for effective intellectual work. indeed Edgar A. Doll (Washington Public School) postulates "the four I.Q.s as Intelligent Quotient. Inner Quest, Ideal Qualities and Innate Quirks) yet it is a necessary condition. Intelligence has to be combined with interest in a special subject, industry, persistent strength of character, confidence and originality if a person is to be designated a genius. These qualities are all difficult to measure, with the exception of the Intelligence Quotient, which is determined by applying a standard individual intelligence test. What must a child's I.Q. be before he is regarded as being "gifted"? This seems to be a matter of definition. Lewis M. Terman's article sets it as 135, Admiral Rickover states that one must make special provision for the talented child with an I.Q. of above 115. Most other educators set the limit at between 120 and 125.

Parents, no less than teachers, must be helped with their handling of the gifted child. Those who counsel parents must bear four main assumptions in mind. (A) The gifted child is firstly a child, and should not be shouldered with too great responsibilities too early. Parents must remember that he will not be equally advanced mentally, emotionally and socially. (B) Each gifted child is unique and cannot be stereotyped. (C) There must be close cooperation between home, school and community teachers for the child's optimum development. (D) Parents have to be guided so that they do not exploit, resent, overdominate or be jealous of their gifted child.

An interesting and topical article deals with "The Upper Limit of ability among American Negroes" by Martin Jenkins (Morgan State College). Statistically, cases above I.Q. 180 should occur once in a million times, but this psychologist found four cases of negroes in this category and one with an I.Q. of 200. However, even in America the basic inferiority of the negro is an assumption which serves to limit achievement and motivation.

There is a review of the proposals and provisions for the education of the gifted, in various states. Donald Kincaid describes educational objectives for the gifted in Californian Elementary Schools. Questionnaires were sent to schools to determine what was being done for gifted children, and it was found that there were twelve main objectives which had more importance for gifted than for ordinary child-

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ren. The chief of these were Effective Thinking, Basic Skills, Citizenship, Understanding of the Environment, Appreciation of Beauty, World Understanding, Character and Human Relations. In order to enable these children to attain these objectives earlier and to a greater degree than ordinary children, some schools utilised enrichment in regular classes, others through special classes or special interest groups, and many believed in acceleration (the shortening of the years spent at school).

The problem of the adjustment of the gifted child has been the subject of considerable research. The hazards of the high I.Q. are apparent in disciplinary problems in the classroom or at home. There is also the question of under-achievement and all its complications.

There is a necessary section on the choice of teachers (with a list of desirable characteristics of a teacher for gifted children compiled by the children themselves) the training of such teachers, both in-service and undergraduate. "A teacher of gifted children, in comparison to teachers in traditional classrooms, should be more intelligent, flexible, and creative, and better informed in areas other than her speciality. She should also have a desire to teach gifted children . . . She need not however be more intelligent than her most intelligent pupil, because she will have had many more experiences from which to draw." (The Editor). Many articles are written about the relative merits of a programme of enrichment, acceleration, special classes and no special provisions. There is much evidence regarding the value of acceleration or grouping but it has been found that a combination of acceleration, special grouping in classes and enrichment works most effectively.

After completing the volume one feels that research has furnished educators with a great deal of information regarding gifted children, which they are not yet using profitably. But as old misconceptions die out and funds and leadership become available a better programme for educating the gifted will emerge.

E.P.R.

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New Zealand analyses causes of University failure.



Success and Failure at the University, by G. W. Parkyn (New Zealand Council for Educational Research).

This is the first volume of an investigation undertaken by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research into the problem of first-year failures at the university, and deals with academic performance and entrance standard. New Zealand is not alone in its concern for the shocking wastage of good material in the fresher year. Britain, the United States, Australia, and South Africa have all in one way or another tried to find reasons for the failures. Not only are good people lost, but many students are fated to start life with a confidence-undermining failure.

Not everyone accepts the common university criticism of the schools as being valid. In America they have realised that the university too has failed in certain ways, more especially perhaps in the integration of the fresher into university studies. This New Zealand investigation is interesting in the light of our experience in South Africa where as many as 40 per cent of students in the first year fail.

University entrance in S. Africa is based primarily on success in the matriculation examination for which high prognostic value is often claimed. In New Zealand, the position is a little more complicated . Post-primary education proper is considered to begin after Form III, or at the age of 13½ years. The School Certificate is taken after three years of post-primary education, i.e. at the age of 16, and though this examination has no connection with university entrance, great faith is placed in the examination as an indication of school level (30% must be obtained in four subjects, and an aggregate of 200 marks, with English as compulsory). A year later comes university entrance, but not necessarily by way of an examination, for the system of accrediting high schools is common in New Zealand. In 1944, all university aspirants sat an external entrance examination; 1955, 83% of students gained entrance to the university by being accredited. "Examinolatry" saw in this the chief cause of university failure, in spite of the fact that the curriculum is not hamstrung by a common syllabus and that due weight is given to the teacher's judgement based on a comprehensive knowledge of the pupil's ability, attainment, and character. A representative Conference on Accrediting was held, and certain criticisms of accrediting were examined; that there is inevitably a variation in standard from school to school and that there is an ever-present danger of a steady lowering of standards. S. Africa hopes to see all whites matriculate (or so we are told), but New Zealand sees the risk that if too many pupils of low standard write an entrance examination, the general standard will be lowered, and that this too would affect the standard of accrediting. From this Conference came the present investigation.

All possible data which might affect university performance were collected: the entrance qualifications were carefully analysed; the total marks in each subject of School Certificate and in the examination as a whole were broken down; the average rank in the class in the lower sixth form, and the course of study in the upper sixth were examined; and consideration was also given to bursaries awarded to the student and to the principal's report. Where available, IQ's were considered (the Otis Test of Mental Ability, Higher Form, and an Australian test of the same type). The average IQ at the four New Zealand universities on the Otis Test was 118, and on the Australian 122, i.e. students came on the whole from the higher levels of ability of the population. These figures are very similar to those in