

**CLASSROOM PROBLEMS
IN THE EDUCATION OF
GIFTED CHILDREN. THESIS**

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Classroom Problems in the Education of Gifted Children. Thesis by Theodore Spafford Henry

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THEODORE SPAFFORD HENRY

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EDUCATION OF GIFTED CHILDREN**

BY

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

If any apology is needed for bringing to the attention of members of the Society the work of one of my former associates, it will be found in the significance of the work itself. To anyone who notes the evolution of educational thought and practice, it must be evident that one of the most clearly evident tendencies of the present day is the "psychologizing" of instruction—the fitting of educational agencies to the needs of the individual pupil. For several years we have recognized the needs of pupils of subnormal mentality. We are now perceiving more clearly the even more crying needs of pupils of supernormal mentality. This *Yearbook* ought to render these needs more evident and at the same time point out how in some measure they may be met.

G. M. W.

CLASSROOM PROBLEMS IN THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED CHILDREN*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant of modern tendencies in educational administration is revealed in the widespread attempts which are being made to adjust the subject matter and methods of the school to the varying needs and capabilities of the children whom it is the purpose of the school to serve. Instead of holding to a rigid scheme of gradation, adjusted to the theoretical "average child," to which all children must be made to conform, those who are in charge of public-school systems are coming to see the advisability of making a more flexible arrangement and a more careful adjustment to the varying aptitudes and capacities of the members of the school population. In other words, there is going on something which has been termed the "psychologizing" of school organization, as well as of school instruction.

Naturally enough, in the movement better to adjust the school to the individual child, as well as to the needs of society, deficient, defective, and subnormal children first came in for attention. They appealed to our sympathy and philanthropy. They were considered a detriment to the work of the normal pupils. It was evident that at best they would be more or less of a burden upon society after their schooldays, as well as in their childhood, and that, therefore, whatever the school might do toward better fitting them to make their own way would be a distinct service to society, as well

*This investigation was suggested and directed by Dr. Guy M. Whipple, at that time Professor of Education in the University of Illinois, now of the University of Michigan. Material assistance in its pursuit was received from Miss Genevieve Coy, at present connected with the Department of Psychology, Ohio State University, and Dr. H. T. Manuel, Professor of Psychology in the Gunnison, Colorado, State Normal School. Acknowledgements are also due the large number of public school officials and teachers who responded to requests for information.

as a benevolence to the afflicted. As a result of the interest aroused in the education of such children, there has developed a distinctive pedagogy of subnormal children, which has assumed quite respectable proportions.

While no one could object to what has been done to make life less burdensome to those who have entered into it under handicaps so heavy, it cannot be denied that if differentiation of instruction is to be confined to those at the lower end of the scale of mental ability, such differentiation is at best one-sided. A division of classes which is made merely by separating from the average those who fall below it is a step in the right direction, but a step that needs another to complement it. In order to bring about a proper balance, provision should also be made for those more fortunate individuals, who, by reason of better and larger gifts, stand at the upper end of the scale. This one-sidedness has only lately begun to receive the attention of educators. Interest in special provision for children of superior mental powers was first exhibited by practical schoolmen. Harris in Saint Louis, Van Sickle in Baltimore, Kendall in Indianapolis, as well as others, became interested in the subject, and not only put into operation within their own school systems, schemes for adapting the school program to the peculiar and distinctive needs of the bright child, but did much in their publications and addresses to arouse a similar interest in other quarters. Petzoldt,¹ in Germany, has carried on an active campaign for the establishment of special schools for gifted children, and has not been daunted by the rather fierce attacks of his critics; while Sickinger, at Mannheim, included in his well-known system provision for such pupils as were fitted to do extra work.

The efforts of these practical school administrators have been given impetus by those psychologists who have been contributing to the psychology of individual differences. Stern has not only given us his important work on individual psychology,² but has made a definite plea for special classes for such pupils as are endowed with

¹ Petzoldt, J. Sonderschulen für hervorragend Befähigte. *Neue Jahrbücher für die Pädagogik*, 14: 1905, 425-456. Also Die Einwände gegen Sonderschulen. *Neue Jahrbücher für Pädagogik*, 28:1911, 1-24.

² Stern, W. *Die differenzielle Psychologie*.