

Enlightenment at the Beginning of the School Year About Questionable Terms from Pre-psychological Times!

"Intelligence" and "giftedness" are not inborn or hereditary and can therefore be promoted

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Global Research, August 22, 2023

Theme: [History](#)

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Introduction

At the beginning of the new school year, concerned parents should urgently be informed about the experiential knowledge of educational-psychological activity and research. Due to a lack of information, many of them fear that their children will not have the necessary intelligence and aptitude to successfully complete the school year.

But: intelligence and aptitude are neither innate nor hereditary, as so many experts from pre-psychological times teach parents; they can therefore be fostered at any time.

"Intelligence" and "Giftedness"

Although intelligence research is a flourishing branch of research in psychology, there is a lack of a binding, generally accepted definition of its object of research. As a rule, "intelligence" is defined as the ability to adapt to unknown situations or to solve new problems (1). The term encompasses the totality of differently developed cognitive abilities for solving a logical, linguistic, mathematical or sense-oriented problem.

Very often there is the opinion that intelligence is an isolated mental faculty that is either present or not, because it is not clear on which mental preconditions the child's intelligence and thus school performance depends. In reality, intelligence and learning ability are often determined psychological functions. Thus, it is quite possible for an intrinsically intelligent child to fail in learning. The fault must then be sought in the overall psychological household.

The “lack of talent” is also a problematic concept that cannot explain academic failure. If a schoolchild fails in a single area or in several subjects, parents or other educators like to say that the child is not gifted in this area.

School Failure Is Not a Lack of Intelligence or Talent

The reasons for failure at school are manifold and cannot be dealt with here in the necessary breadth. However, it is important to note that organic disorders of intelligence only play a decisive role in very rare cases, because organically caused imbecility has a conspicuous symptomatology, so that these children are always recorded at an early stage and given their own education.

Educational-psychological school experience and research results teach us that poor school performance or “false stupidity” cannot usually be attributed to a lack of intelligence or talent, but to educational misconduct. This connection, revealed by depth psychology, must be taken into account in the case of school difficulties.

School learning failure is therefore not a question of will or malice on the part of the child. Often all kinds of factors are cited as causes of the child’s failure; however, it is undisputed that the educational milieu is decisive for the child’s probation in school. This could be a reason for parents to reflect and ask whether the right path was taken in education.

As a teacher, one can observe again and again that a stable child’s self-esteem is the actual prerequisite for the child’s ability to learn. However, courage to face life and self-esteem are acquired above all by children who grow up in an orderly family environment. Poor marital relations, for example, do not give rise to a childlike feeling of security, and an authoritarian or overly conscientious upbringing can convey to the child at an early age that “you can never do it right”. The children then transfer this feeling to school and experience the teacher as well as the parents as uncomprehending and intransigent people.

It is not only the relationship between child and parents that needs to be considered, but also the relationship between siblings. A child’s jealousy is capable of stopping his or her interest in school if, for example, he or she feels disadvantaged or set back in relation to the siblings. This can mobilise affects of envy or bitterness that weigh heavily on the child’s mind.

The jealous behaviour, which can express itself in quarrels and abusive behaviour of all kinds, often affects the whole family and leads to such a drain on the jealous person’s energy that he or she no longer has any energy left for school.

“Intelligence” as a Function of Psychic Attention

By explaining that all intelligence is a function of mental attention, i.e. that intelligent action is only possible where sustained interest is developed, depth psychology ties in with the findings of the famous experimental psychology school of the German physiologist and psychologist Wilhelm Maximilian Wundt (1832-1920).

In 1879, Wundt founded the first institute for experimental psychology at the University of Leipzig with a systematic research programme. He is therefore regarded as the founder of psychology as an independent science (2).

Based on Wundt's findings, it must be asked under what conditions a child is prevented from developing a genuine interest in school and learning, which then results in the so-called lack of intelligence. According to the experience of many teachers and child psychotherapists, probably more than three quarters of all "stupid" children are those who, as a result of their overall psychological constellation, are not able to develop the attention required by the school.

Fear is the worst blockage of intelligent behaviour in the soul life of the child.

Very often one finds anxious and inhibited children among so-called unintelligent school children. They do not feel at home in school because of their shyness. As a result, they experience school life as such a dangerous situation that they are hardly able to calmly apply themselves to the learning workload. Wherever children or adults get into states of anxiety, the psychological processes get out of joint.

However, the anxious person is not only anxious in acute examination and probation situations; he carries this anxiety around with him all the time. Anxious schoolchildren, for example, live in constant fear of being called on and often perceive the mere glance of the teacher as a reprimand and rebuke.

Even if they have learned and practised their subject well at home, they can fail in class as soon as it is important to present what they have learned. This leads to mental paralysis, which also dampens their enthusiasm for learning. This often leads to resignation, which sees the school training as futile and finally leads to "false stupidity", which is basically only attention disturbed by fear.

Spoiling and Pampering Are Not Good Prerequisites for Children's Ability to Learn

Other forms of "child stupidity", which teachers increasingly observe and whose pseudo-character psychotherapists could uncover, result from a spoiling and pampering upbringing. Such an educational climate is misunderstood by many parents as true love of children. But loving a child does not mean showering it with such tenderness that its inner independence is crushed.

Psychological experience teaches that love is not simply an exuberant feeling: rather, it is a serious and not easy task that must be carefully learned. Love for the child should be knowing and seeing, it must not only want to do good to the child, it must also give the good to the child at the right time and in the right way.

Spoiling educators can thus oppose the child's urge for independence by unconsciously fearing from a positive psychological development of the child that this will alienate the beloved child from the parents. The strongly spoiled child thus does not learn to make its own experiences and thus does not practise its existing skills and dexterities. When it starts school, it therefore finds itself in the company of more capable and rowdy companions to whom it does not feel equal. For children who are made internally dependent on a guardian, this can lead to a paralysis effect that can last throughout their entire school career and ultimately lead to failure if they are expected to complete something on their own and without help.

Teachers repeatedly make the observation that a stable child's self-esteem is the best

prerequisite for a child's ability to learn.

The Good News Usually Does Not Provide an Occasion for a Process of Self-contemplation

As positive as the psychological message is that “intelligence and “giftedness” are not innate and hereditary psychological factors and can therefore be changed for the better, it usually remains the case, however, that parents see no reason in it to initiate a process of self-reflection, with or without the support of a psychotherapist, as to whether they have taken the right path in their upbringing – and what could possibly be improved.

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He is a regular contributor to Global Research.

Notes

(1) <https://www.spektrum.de/lexikon/psychologie/intelligenz/7263>

(2) https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelm_Wundt

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