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AN APPRAISAL OF A PROJECT
FOR ACADEMICALLY GIFTED CHILDREN

by

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PREFACE

The study which is the basis of this thesis is part of a project for the education of gifted children which had its inception in the deliberations of the Palmerston North Institute for Educational Research in the late 1950s. For a period of 7 years a committee, specially set up for the purpose, has organised a series of 'enrichment' programmes for groups of gifted children from Std 4 through to Form II. A complete review of the whole project is being undertaken by Mr K. McIlroy who is the secretary of the Committee for the Education of Academically Gifted Children, but this particular study was designed to provide some objective evaluation of a programme being provided for one group over a two year period. This necessitated the selection of a control as well as an experimental group, both of which were given a series of tests and rating scales at the beginning and the end of the period of study. By comparing the amount and direction of change in scores from the pre-test to the post-test situation it was anticipated that some conclusions could be made about the effectiveness of this particular enrichment programme. The results of this analysis seem to indicate quite clearly that, as far as can be determined by the instruments used, the programme had no significant effect on the experimental group as a whole compared with the control. Consequently it would be well worth considering ways of educating the gifted other than those used in this Palmerston North project.

In addition to the analysis of the data obtained from the series of tests an attempt has been made to review some of the extensive literature on the gifted as it relates to the objectives and procedures of this local programme. In the light of some of the current writings in this field and as a consequence of the findings of this study some attempt has been made to make constructive suggestions about any future developments in this area.

In carrying out my investigations I have become indebted to many more people than could possibly be named. I wish, however, to express my grateful thanks to Professor Hayman of the Mathematics Department, Massey University, for suggestions about, and approval of, suitable statistical methods; to members of the Committee for the Education of Academically Gifted Children, and especially Mr J. Foote of the Psychological Service, for making information and material readily available; to the Headmasters of the schools where the pupils were enrolled for making time and facilities available for testing; to the class teachers who willingly provided information about the pupils in both groups; to the pupils themselves who undertook all the tests without any signs of dissatisfaction; and to Dr Bray, senior lecturer in Education at Massey University for his help and advice in planning and executing this study.

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