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The education of gifted and talented children

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BOOK REVIEW

THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN:

Report by the Senate Select Committee on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children.

Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra 1988.

This report, published in March, 1988, is the result of an extensive inquiry into the education of gifted and talented children in Australia. It is based on 171 submissions from a wide range of people and organizations, (a list is included as an appendix), public hearings held in all capital cities, and visits to a number of schools and centres offering special provisions.

The report includes chapters which contain information which is readily available elsewhere, such as problems of definition and identification, and the characteristics and concerns of gifted children, their parents and their teachers.

However, there is clearly a focus on the Australian experience. The chapter relating to educational provisions for gifted children highlights the range and diversity of provisions both within and between each state. Nevertheless, the report concludes that most Australian schools do not appear to make any provision for the education of gifted children.

There is an interesting chapter on special populations, and the issue of excellence versus equity is examined in some depth. Ultimately, the committee "considers that ideally, the pursuit of excellence is consistent with providing for the educational needs of most children". (p. 169).

The report concludes with a number of important recommendations, all within the Commonwealth's area of involvement. These include the provision of special education strategies for gifted children throughout Australia; pre-service and in-service training of teachers, the development of materials for isolated children, and the establishment of a national centre for research into the education of gifted and talented children in an Australian tertiary institution.

The report is easy to read, and well referenced. The real test of its effectiveness will be in the implementation of the recommendations - and this requires not only dedication but strong financial support.

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