

**A STUDY OF SOME FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE GROWTH  
of  
INDIVIDUALITY IN THE CLASSROOM**

**AN ABSTRACT OF  
A THESIS  
PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
OF DANBURY STATE COLLEGE**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
MASTER OF SCIENCE**

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March 1967**

An attempt has been made in this thesis to show that, as a result of changing social values, there appears to be a new focus of purpose in education. The aim is seen as a twofold one which aspires to go beyond traditional curriculum in order to serve the interests of the individual as well as the group. One aspect involves efforts to help the individual develop his talents to their highest potential, ideally to the creative level; the other aspect involves efforts to develop individual social awareness through better understandings of others, ideally progressing to social harmony. The two ideas are combined in this thesis and termed "Individuality."

The purpose of the main body of the thesis is to isolate some of the factors that influence the growth of individuality. The fourth grade has been used as the vantage point for investigation and assessment because it was felt that talents often show themselves at this level.

Before discussing the various aspects involved in a study of the manner in which a student can best be helped toward developing individuality, a backward look at child growth and development is undertaken in order to understand the beginnings of human variability. An investigation of some of the factors that create individual differences in the pre-school and early school years are discussed. Some numerous variations in the circumstances of nature and nurture

are shown to result in the formation of a distinct personality structure. Evidence suggests that by the time the child reaches the fourth grade, the sum total of innate and experiential factors tend to shape a specific kind of attitude toward the self, toward others, and toward the larger world. The nature and state of development within these particular areas are of vital importance in later discussions of creative potential.

While the development of both intellectual talent and social awareness are interrelated and while factors influencing their growth often occur simultaneously in the classroom, for purposes of organization, these two aspects of development are discussed separately.

Some studies are cited which indicate that the teacher, under certain conditions, can bring about behavioral changes making for healthier interpersonal relations. They may be operative in the three broad areas within the sphere of teacher influence--teacher/class, teacher/pupil, and peer group.

Before investigation shifts to some factors that influence the growth of intellectual talent in the classroom, creativity, as the ideal, is defined. Some research findings on the mechanisms involved in adult creative thinking are then described. Whenever possible these mechanisms are related to current application in the classroom.

Although the total process of creative thinking appears to be highly complex, what is revealed in the research selected for study, indicates that two major psychological

processes are involved. These are the ability to make the strange familiar, and the ability to make the familiar strange. The first is concerned with having a broad enough base of knowledge upon which the specific creative train of thought can draw. The second mechanism is concerned with having multidimensional ways of viewing the familiar.

Additional research on creative-type persons seemed to indicate a positive relationship between certain personality attributes and individual creative potential. Some of these common factors or attributes were, an intense curiosity, a positive awareness of self and of others, and of the larger world . . . the very attributes that were found to have been structured early in the life of the child, probably in the pre-school years.

It, therefore, seemed logical to conclude that if mechanisms designed to bolster creative potential were appended to the curriculum, their range of effectiveness would be limited. Those likely to benefit would be individuals who most nearly possessed the composite of necessary personality attributes meshed to a set of developing talents.

It was concluded that the teacher who possessed the guidance viewpoint might have a greater understanding and be better equipped to provide for any positive factors of influence in the development of individuality in the classroom.