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Introduction

The area of gifted education used to be similar to a majestic river in winter—the ice was covering any activity below the surface, and it seemed to those who were looking only at the surface that nothing was happening and nothing was ever going to happen. Now it is spring in Gifted Education, and while the surface ice floats of bureaucracy are still there and threaten to sink many emerging ideas, and many gifted children as well, nevertheless the flow is free or nearly free, and all the knowledge acquired during the hidden years is surfacing.

Hawker Brownlow Education has been at the forefront of providing gifted education in Australia with materials for parents, teachers and the gifted children themselves. Thanks to them, we now know how to provide for the gifted from their early childhood to their adolescence, which methods are good to use and why, and how to use them. They brought us materials from overseas and materials freshly written at home. Thanks to them and to some of our universities, which gave themselves wholeheartedly to training school teachers in the new methods, we have now most of the nuts and bolts, and it remains only to persuade

teachers to use the methodology available, both for identification and for teaching provisions.

It is because of this effort, in which I had the pleasure to participate, that I feel that now is the time to go further.

I am simply afraid that we may be lulled into a feeling that the gifted education provisions and problems stop there. That if we stop boring our gifted children with inadequate methodological provisions, we have done enough. And I don't believe that simply providing adequate methods to our most precious resource is enough.

This book, thanks to the effort expended previously by all participants, is attempting to go further. To ask not the How, but the basic questions about the gifted, their specific differences not in terms of learning, but in terms of their future, the Why in terms of their life satisfaction, of their self concept, of their societal role.

In doing so, it was necessary to seem to attack some sacred cows of our society. But it is a book about and for gifted adolescents, and the best of adolescents always did question to an uncomfortable level. This book tries to draw attention to this questioning "window of opportunity" in the life of our gifted children, and perhaps tries to remind their teachers and parents that there once was a time during which they themselves asked questions which were more than questions about How, the basic "Why" questions, and that just because we stopped asking, the questions did not cease to exist.