

DR. FRANK FREEMAN ADDRESSES COLLEGE

"Influence of Environment and Training on Intellectual Development" Is Subject

"The child's present intellectual attainment is due both to his inherited capacity and to the influence of education, from the home and all the environment that has been brought to bear on him from birth." This statement, made by Dr. Frank N. Freeman of the University of Chicago in a lecture on "The Influence of Environment and Training on the Intellectual Development" given before the students of the National Kindergarten and Elementary college yesterday afternoon, and backed by his years of study and research along this line, was of great interest to teachers and parents who for several years have been confronted with the prevailing idea that neither environment nor education could affect the inborn intellectual ability of the child.

Dr. Freeman opened his talk with a description of the old fashioned idea of education, which considered that the chief purpose of the school was to improve the child's general capacity, to increase his mental powers—the idea that the training or discipline received in a specific type of training or activity would be carried over and generalized and enable the student to perform other activities better than he could otherwise have done. Psychologists of recent years have denied absolutely that this generalization takes place, and their opinion has been reinforced by that of the educators who accepted the extreme view of the intelligence tests as a measure of the inherent mental capacity of the child which cannot be changed by education or environment.

"It seems to me that if this view is true it is rather discouraging," said Dr. Freeman. "It transfers the emphasis from training to testing, from trying to develop the child to give him some specific habits, from the improvement or increase of the child's inheritance to merely trying to classify the child and give him specific items of training to adjust himself to certain types of problems.

According to Dr. Freeman, there is some generalization, some transfer of ability from one activity to another, and although this is not nearly as great as had formerly been supposed it is well worth working for. However, the criticism of this old-fashioned idea has resulted in the realization that it is possible for an activity to have specific value as well as general value, and this should be taken into consideration.

Dr. Freeman suggested that the psychologists have been handicapped in their study of mental tests by the fact that in most cases the natural environment and training and the inborn mental ability of the child have gone together. Intelligent parents usually give their children a good type of environment and education, and parents of low intelligence are unable to provide these for their children. An exception to this general rule is found in the case of foster children which Dr. Freeman has made.

Most of the foster children were of comparatively low intelligence and the majority of the homes into which they were taken offered superior advantages in the way of environment and education. Mental tests were given to a group of 75 of the children before they went into the new homes, and again at the end of four years, and the intelligence score at the second testing was several points higher than in the first. This and other tests carried on with the entire group of children seemed to prove conclusively that the

intelligence of the children was affected by the homes—that it was raised in general because the homes were better than the children would have had with their own parents.

"We cannot neglect inheritance or native individual differences," said Dr. Freeman in conclusion, "but we do not need to conclude that education is powerless to affect the child's intellectual growth or his conduct."

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