



## The Ascent of Educational Psychology in Denmark in the Interwar Years

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### *Abstract*

In this article, we argue that an understanding of the interwar years and the ascent of educational psychology contribute valuable knowledge about the inner workings of modern-day education with regard to the links between society and education in general and the boundary between normality and deviation in particular. The establishment of the educational psychologist's office at Frederiksberg in Denmark, the introduction of IQ testing, and the related psychological files of students provide an image of a period of measurement in schools during which IQ testing was decisive in decisions to transfer students to the remedial school. The testing and filing were the foremost important technologies of the period. We draw on sources that allow us to view educational psychology and testing in their local, national, and political context. The sources applied are primarily obtained from Frederiksberg City Archive that contains archives from the Educational Psychology Office.

### *Keywords*

educational psychology, Danish history of education, educational testing, filing of students, psycholisation

## Introduction

In the spring of 1930, public school teacher and psychologist Henning Meyer (1885–1967) performed intelligence tests on 15 children, who were then recommended for transfer to a remedial school in the municipality of Frederiksberg, neighbouring Copenhagen.<sup>1</sup> This event marked a new and epoch-making practice that would spread to the entire Danish public school system in the years to come. By 1949, educational psychology offices had been established in the major provincial towns of Aalborg, Aarhus Esbjerg, Frederikshavn, Horsens, and Odense with all the elements of the Frederiksberg service.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 Christian Ydesen, *The Rise of High-Stakes Educational Testing in Denmark (1920–1970)* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2011), 47.
- 2 Harald Torpe, "Skolepsykologien i Danmark," *Nordisk Psykologi* 1, no. 3–4 (1949), 86–99.

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In this article, we argue that the development of educational psychology should be seen not only as an internal school matter, but as a broader psychologisation of school that involves a particular way of organising the relations between normality and deviance within a heterogeneous group of students and where the function of psychology is to construct modern individuals according to the needs of society. In our approach, we are thus inspired by Michel Foucault's analysis of the relation between normality and deviance practised through dividing practices in modern institutions.<sup>3</sup> According to Nikolas Rose, the construction of modern individualities and the organisation of human differences in schools and in society as a whole were carried out by a process in which psychology played a crucial role as a regime of truth.<sup>4</sup>

Although this function of constructing individuals to meet the needs of society could in fact be said to hold true of school as such, educational psychology, carrying its scientific emblem, presents the very "engine room" of the links between the societal sphere and schooling, because it constitutes the legitimising knowledge base for professional intervention into deviating children's and families' lives. At the heart of this legitimising knowledge base lies the intelligence test – to be conducted exclusively by educational psychologists and doctors affiliated with mental care institutions – which was claimed to be scientific, generating comparable results, and empirical. In other words, the consequence of this analytical perspective is that educational psychology served as a regime of knowledge categorising human differences and justifying interventions which makes it relevant as an object of historical research.

A central element of the new practice at Frederiksberg was precisely the introduction of tests that claimed to be of scientific value into the Danish field of education, which at the very least impacted pedagogical thinking in Denmark, including the relation between pedagogy and psychology and views on normality and deviance.<sup>5</sup> These tests differed in numerous ways from exams because they claimed to be scientific and objective. With intelligence testing, a school's streaming practices acquired scientific legitimacy and psychology achieved precedence as the scientific foundation of schooling and pedagogy.

These observations on the role of educational psychology in general and the importance of intelligence tests in particular find support in a 1953 definition of educational psychologist, as

a professional with psychological knowledge working within the school with the task of examining children, who in various ways constitute greater difficulties than the teachers see themselves able to handle with the time, psychological insight and means at their disposal.<sup>6</sup>

The quote testifies to the privileged position of educational psychology as an arbiter of knowledge used to conduct schooling in the Danish public school system.

Focusing on the links between society and educational psychology, Professor of

3 Michel Foucault, *Overvågning og straf*, trans. Mogens Chrom Jacobsen (Helsingør: Det Lille Forlag 2002), 192.

4 Nikolas Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power and Personhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 104.

5 Carsten Bendixen, *Psykologiske teorier om intelligens og folkeskolens elevdifferentiering* (Roskilde: Roskilde Universitetscenter, 2006).

6 *Leksikon for opdragere* (Copenhagen: Schultz, 1953). Our translation.

Psychology Simo Køppe, using a Marxist approach, emphasises that educational psychology historically had three main functions derived from the societal sphere of production: to create formal principles for controlling the desired achievement level in each class, to construct useful procedures for identifying mentally disabled children, and to subsequently treat them.<sup>7</sup> Although Marxist approaches are no longer commonplace, international research has shown a close link between educational testing and external societal demands.<sup>8</sup>

In a more general perspective, however, the policies and practices of education have always had to deal with heterogeneous pupils and, diachronically, the pendulum has swung in a continuum between exclusion, streaming, and various forms of inclusion, ranging from merely keeping different pupils in the same classroom to specific and targeted pedagogical and professional measures. Historically, these pendulum swings have all been justified by different knowledge regimes concerning the social, the human being, and the role and purpose of education. For this reason the historical analysis of education must – as one of its prime objectives – identify the foundation of the dominant knowledge regime in order to understand how and why certain educational policies and practices emerge. In this article, we focus on the interwar years because it was then that a new knowledge regime closely associated with perceived scientific testing was introduced into the Danish public school system. This new knowledge regime is part and parcel of an emerging professionalisation of school, a professionalisation that gained hegemonic momentum with the rise of the welfare state and later in the era of neoliberalism and globalisation.<sup>9</sup> Thus, an understanding of the interwar years and the ascent of educational psychology contribute valuable knowledge about the inner workings of modern-day education with regard to the links between society and education in general and the boundary between normality and deviation in particular. In this way, the article provides background knowledge for many contemporary debates and issues surrounding education, such as the use of tests and the placement of children within the educational system.

### Historiography, sources, and methodology

As with any aspect of the history of education, research on the ascent of Danish educational psychology in general and intelligence testing in the interwar years calls

7 Simo Køppe, *Psykologiens udvikling og formidling i Danmark i perioden 1850–1980* (Copenhagen: Gads forlag, 1983).

8 Thom Axelsson, *Rätt elev i rätt klass: Skola, begåvning och styrning 1910–1950* (Linköping: Linköpings universitet, 2007); Joanne Brown, *The Definition of a Profession* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Paul Davis Chapman, *Schools as Sorters: Lewis M. Terman, Applied Psychology, and the Intelligence Testing Movement, 1890–1930* (New York: New York University Press, 1988); Bjørn Hamre, *Potentialitet og Optimering: Problemforståelser og forskelssætninger af elever – en nutidshistorisk analyse* (Aarhus: Aarhus University, 2012); Erwin Johanningmeier and Theresa Richardson, “Intelligence Testing: The Legitimation of a Meritocratic Educational Science,” *International Journal of Educational Research* 27, no. 8 (1998), 699–714; Christian Lundahl, *Viljan att veta vad andra vet* (Stockholm: Arbetslivsinstitutet, 2006); Nikolas Rose, “Psykologens blick,” in *Foucault: Namnet på en modern vetenskaplig och filosofisk problematik*, eds. Kenneth Hultqvist and Kenneth Petersson (Stockholm: HLS, 1995), 175–95; Ydesen (2011).

9 Kari Ludvigsen, Christian Lundahl, and Christian Ydesen, “Creating an Educational Testing Profession: The Emergence and Impact of the Scandinavian Testing Community, 1920–1960,” *European Educational Research Journal* 13, Special Issue, no. 1 (2013), 120–38.

for careful reflection on constructive theoretical concepts, which sources to use, and how the research subject is constructed using such an approach. A viable path for such an undertaking is to enter into a dialogue with the existing research because it creates an awareness of research gaps, demarcations, trends, and traditions.

In Denmark, research on the history of educational psychology in general and intelligence testing in particular reveals a very strong current of psychologists writing the history of their own profession.<sup>10</sup> However, none of these works treat the existence of educational psychology in Danish educational history as a phenomenon needing explanation. Most of the research is engaged in prosaic descriptions of different currents and themes in the history of Danish educational psychology or different educational psychological developments in local institutions. The major exceptions are Carsten Bendixen's dissertation from 2006 and our own dissertations from 2011 and 2012, which draw on the spatial turn in the history of education research and a Foucauldian approach, respectively.

Bendixen raises the question of how psychological theories, concepts, and methods concerning intelligence and cognition were transformed into pedagogical-psychological discourses in the Danish public school system between 1920 and 2006. Bendixen argues for a divergence between the discourses of educational psychologists and the concurrent knowledge production of psychometric and cognitive psychology, due to a disengagement of practice from research.<sup>11</sup> This divergence runs counter to our theoretical understanding, which, as indicated above, sees strong links between societal needs and the emergence of educational psychology and intelligence testing, that is, the psychologisation of the school – meaning that we understand educational psychology not as an independent science but as a knowledge base that could organise society's need to discipline and control human differences in accordance with the objectives of the state.

To work with this theoretically founded hypothesis through an empirical historical analysis, we draw on sources that allow us to view educational psychology and testing in their local, national, and political context. These sources, which we also used in our respective dissertations, comprise the records of children born in 1920, 1929, and 1930, obtained from the Frederiksberg City Archive, the Frederiksberg Educational System records from 1920 to 1943,<sup>12</sup> the Frederiksberg City Council proceedings from 1920 to 1943, the School Commission records, and the Educatio-

10 The following is a select group, to name but a few examples: Svend Ellehammer Andersen and Finn Lambert, *Specialpædagogik – Almene synspunkter*, vol. I (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1977); Niels Egelund, "Specialklasser – noget nyt – noget der bør forsvinde – noget der kommer igen?" *Handicaphistorisk tidsskrift* 17, no. 2 (2000), 40–51; Elisabeth Jacobsen, "Træk af skolepsykologiens historie," *Skolepsykologi* 26, no. 5–6 (1989), 325–406; Franz From, Rolf Willanger, Arne Friemuth Petersen, and Ib Kristian Moustgaard, "Det filosofiske fakultet," in *Københavns Universitet 1479–1979*, vol. 10, eds. P. J. Jensen et al. (Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 1980); Køppe (1983); Kaj Spelling, "Skolepsykologerne og deres prøver," in *Børn, Lærere, Psykologer: En bog til Thomas Sigsgaard*, eds. Jesper Florander and Hans Vejleskov (Vojens: Munksgaard, 1979), 102–11; Harald Torpe, "Pædagogisk psykologi i hundrede år," in *Udviklingslinier i dansk psykologi fra Alfred Lehmann til i dag*, eds. Ib Kristian Moustgaard and Arne Friemuth Petersen (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1986b), 88–117; Bjørn Glæsel and Palle Johansen, eds., "Mellem fortid og nutid – 50 års jubilæum," *Pædagogisk Psykologisk Tidsskrift* 51, no. 3 (2014).

11 Bendixen (2006), 56, 91, 238.

12 In 1943, the leading agent Henning Meyer, a Jew, fled to Gothenburg, Sweden, in response to Nazi pogroms in Denmark.

nal Psychology Office files, in combination with relevant interwar publications of the leading agents and groups<sup>13</sup> advocating the introduction of educational psychology and intelligence testing.

Our first analytical step is then to focus on four historical lines of development that are important parts of the historical context and background from which the ascent of educational psychology at Frederiksberg in the 1930s began. The first is the development of special education. The second is the political and economic situation at Frederiksberg. The third is the organisational background that existed then, and, finally, the fourth line of development consists of international trends and issues. Having established the contextual knowledge, the next step is to focus on the actual practice at Frederiksberg with a keen eye on intelligence testing and the school records of children. The conclusion of the article sums up the findings through a discussion of the role of the psychologisation of modern schools.

### **Abnormal, remedial, and auxiliary classes**

In 1814 the Danish public school system (*Folkeskolen*) was established. In 1855, the first Danish institution, a private school for the care of so-called idiotic, imbecile, and epileptic children – was founded at Frederiksberg. In 1865, a second school was founded in Copenhagen. Thus, the practice of sorting children according to their abilities extends back to at least the mid-19th century in Danish society, although within the realm of private schools.

In 1891, the municipality of Frederiksberg established a special remedial class for mentally disabled children. Two additional classes followed the initiative in 1899. In the 1900/01 school year, three extra classes were established at Frederiksberg and the municipality of Copenhagen followed suit and established three remedial classes for different types of mentally disabled children, following German practice.

In 1899, the Keller mental care institutions, named after their founder Johan Keller (1830–1884), were relocated to Bregninge in Jutland. This made it harder to find suitable places for mentally disabled children outside the public school system. With the passing of the 1899 Education Act that reduced the number of children in each class, teachers became increasingly aware of mentally disabled children in their classes. These two factors also seem to have played a role in the establishment of ability grouping in the Danish public school system.<sup>14</sup>

In urban schools, there was the increasingly pressing problem of children lagging behind in classes. Since 1814, annual achievement tests had been conducted in Danish schools to determine the promotion of children to the next class level, a practice resulting in a great number of detained pupils in urban schools.<sup>15</sup> At the beginning of the 20th century, as many as 16–17 % of pupils in Copenhagen left the educational system from the auxiliary classes (*hjælpeklasser*) for children with minor difficulties and an additional 1–2 % of the pupil population left the educational system from

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13 For a thorough presentation of these agents and groups, see Christian Ydesen, “The International Space of the Danish Testing Community in the Interwar Years,” *Paedagogica Historica* 48, no. 4 (2012), 589–99.

14 Ydesen (2011), Ch. 3.

15 In the rural schools, the phenomenon was not as propagated, since the pupils were mixed, regardless of class.

remedial classes for children with severe problems.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, a great number of children were detained for at least one year in normal school. The relatively high number of children detained was fertile ground for a practice claiming to be able to identify those children unable to follow general classroom teaching and who often disturbed the classroom.

Intelligence testing seemed to be the technology able to meet these educational challenges and at the same time improve efficiency and order in Frederiksberg schools. Thus, it is in the tension between normal school and remedial school in Frederiksberg that educational psychology entered Denmark. The remedial school system was both the entry point and subsequent *raison d'être* of educational psychology.<sup>17</sup> In the 1920s, remedial school functioned to inherit problem children from normal school. The social imbalance in many remedial classes is reflected in the presence of markedly more cases of poor physical development and hygiene problems compared with normal classes.<sup>18</sup> The remedial classes of the 1920s thus functioned as a sorting mechanism for all kinds of children who did not fit into normal school. The common denominator was some kind of problem with the child in question.

Up until Meyer's employment, Frederiksberg teachers and their headmasters – in consultation with the school doctor – recommended children directly to remedial school, whereupon their intelligence would be tested and examined by doctors.<sup>19</sup> The introduction of the Educational Psychology Office in Frederiksberg meant a challenge to the doctors' previous monopoly in performing intelligence tests. Thus, the public school system expanded its area of expertise and gained a new voice of scientific authority in relation to mental care institutions. Educational psychology constituted a growth in public school competencies. The Educational Psychology Office began to function as the mediating authority between the normal school and remedial schools.

In conjunction with this change of practice, educational psychologists assigned specific IQ intervals to the different school levels, as a rule of thumb. Normal school should consist of children with an IQ from 90 to 110. Remedial school was for children with an IQ from 70 to 90. Mental care institutions were for children with an IQ below 70.<sup>20</sup> The IQ limit of 70 for children transferred to the mental care institution was even canonised by a 1943 circular following the 1937 Education Act.

This new practice was, to all appearances, far more systematic and efficient than practices prior to educational psychology's establishment in Frederiksberg. In line

16 Ning de Coninck-Smith, *For barnets skyld: Byen, skolen og barndommen 1880–1914* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2000), 167.

17 Ydesen (2011), Ch. 4.1.2.

18 *Betænkning afgivet af det af UVM nedsatte udvalg vedrørende oprettelse af særklasser i folkeskolen for børn, der ikke kan følge den almindelige undervisning* [Report from the Ministerial Committee Pertaining to the Establishment of Remedial Classes for Children Unable to Follow Normal Teaching] (Copenhagen: Ministry of Education, 1943), 14.

19 Janus W. Christiansen, Mikkel S. Thomsen, and Jacob Walter, "Hans Christian Johannesen og hjælpeklasserne" [Hans Christian Johannesen and Remedial Classes], *Handicaphistorisk tidsskrift* 17, no. 2 (2000), 9–26.

20 Henning Meyer, "Hjælpekolen for svagt begavede børn" [Remedial School for Mentally Disabled Children], *Børn* (1939), 23; F. C. Kaalund-Jørgensen, "Hvad gør vi for de Børn, der ikke kan følge Folkeskolens almindelige Undervisning?" [What Do We Do for Children Who Cannot Follow Normal Teaching?], *Hjælpskolan* 20 (1942), 87–95; William Douglas Wall, ed., *Psychological Services for Schools* (New York: UNESCO Institute for Education, 1956), 50.

with the article's theoretical perspective, this might be viewed as an example of how educational psychology, with testing as a technology, contributed to discipline and organised the configurations of normality and deviance through the detachment of the remedial school from normal school.

### The political and economic situation in Frederiksberg

There was a political desire in Frederiksberg to respond to the problems of children lagging behind in the classes, to identify the "right" children for remedial education, and to maintain the structure of the educational system. There was a pedagogical desire to overcome dissatisfaction with the existing selection procedures, whereby intelligence testing would not be used before the child came into contact with the mental care institutions, where doctors had a monopoly on such testing. Finally, there was a political and pedagogical goal to avert systemic collapse due to the pressure of having children of highly different abilities in the same classes. Educational psychology and testing helped defend the framework of the existing educational system by offering a solution to the problem, navigating between normal and remedial classes. Testing protected the educational organisation of dividing children into normal and remedial education and confirmed the overall streaming system, which was based on a concept of children's innate abilities and giftedness.

The municipality of Frederiksberg's economic situation was such that it could afford to offer solutions for these challenges. Between 1924 and 1940, the Frederiksberg educational system was able to increase the amount spent on each schoolchild. Part of this increased expenditure per schoolchild occurred because of the expansion of remedial education and the establishment of educational psychology.

However, educational psychology's use of intelligence testing was not an independent scientific system but was completely dependent on the actual economic and political situation. Thus, it is remarkable that finances seem to have played an important role in the establishment of the IQ intervals. In 1929, the leading reform pedagogue Sofie Ribbjerg wrote that when a child was transferred to remedial education, the reasons were of an "economic rather than psychological or pedagogical nature".<sup>21</sup> As late as 1964, Harald Torpe (1910–1994) wrote about the same issue: "Nor can there be any doubt that the social and economic standard of a municipality influences the number of children [in remedial education]."<sup>22</sup> This means that the widely recognised IQ interval of 70–90 probably depended upon Frederiksberg's financial situation and what the education system could afford. The point is further substantiated by the fact that while the Frederiksberg Educational Psychology Office worked with an IQ interval of 70–90 for children in remedial education, the provincial city of Aalborg, at the beginning of its educational psychology work in 1941, set an interval of 75–90. Apparently, there are no scientific reasons for this difference, which naturally carried significant consequences for each individual child. The comparison between the Frederiksberg and Aalborg practices illustrates how the implementation of scientific disciplines and the concomitant psychological and pedagogical practice

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21 Sofie Ribbjerg, "Bør værnesholen være en normalskole i det smaa eller bør den have sin egen form?" [Should Remedial School Be a Lighter Version of Normal School or Should It Have Its Own Form?], *Hjælpskolan* 7 (1929), 69–78.

22 Harald Torpe, *Intelligensforskning og intelligensprøver* [Intelligence Research and Intelligence Tests] (Copenhagen: Schultz, 1964), 179.

was not developed on the basis of inherent scientific logic but, rather, was shaped as a result of economic and political realities.

The goal, which was supported by politicians at both the local and national levels, was to optimise the use of a child's abilities so the child could become a useful member of society.<sup>23</sup> Educational psychology thus functioned as an effective way able to format and discipline citizens and, by employing intelligence testing, it could ensure that no resources would apparently be wasted on those deemed unfit.

### Organisational background

In January 1914, the Society for Experimental Pedagogy [*Foreningen for Eksperimentalpædagogik*] was founded and public school teacher Christian Hansen Tybjerg (1873–1956) served as its chair. The declared goal of the society was to promote psychological and pedagogical knowledge based on pedagogical experiments in the Danish public school system. Based on this agenda, the society organised talks, wrote articles, and appealed through the media to exert influence on decision makers shaping the Danish public school system. However, in spite of the significant scientific weight offered by the society, its many international contacts, and its strategy of propagating the modern ideas of applied psychology and experimental pedagogy in the Danish educational field, teachers at the time were generally reluctant about “experimenting with children”. Thus, the studies of the society were often met with a high degree of scepticism by schools. Thus, the Society for Experimental Pedagogy never managed to realise its ambitions of introducing applied psychology and experimental pedagogy into the Danish educational system. However, it did manage to clear the way for applied psychology and experimental pedagogy to become respectable fields of expertise. Moreover, it generated a sense of community among people who sought change in the Danish educational field, people such as Meyer, Rifbjerg, and Pedersen, offering them a sheltering harbour. The society became a space where international contacts were nurtured, international research was available, and the transfer and translation of this research could be discussed among like-minded people.

In 1924, a new organisation emerged onto the Danish pedagogical scene, called the Educational Psychology Study Commission, and it consisted of the leading members of all the important educational institutions in the country, including the teachers' unions.<sup>24</sup> The task of the commission was to devise various types of tests and, in 1930, the commission published one of its most important publications: a Danish standardisation of the Binet–Simon intelligence test developed by Rifbjerg, Marie Kirkelund (1877–1954), and Pedersen.

The commission was a quasi-public organisation funded by a mixture of public and quasi-public money, including government, municipal, and teachers' union funds.<sup>25</sup> From its very beginning, the commission maintained close ties with the Ministry of Education, which, in 1925, requested that the commission provide a number of tests to be employed as a supplement to the existing entrance examination for

23 Henning Bro and Helga Mohr, *Frederiksberg kommune 1858–2008* [The Municipality of Frederiksberg, 1858–2008] (Frederiksberg: Historisk-topografisk Selskab for Frederiksberg, 2008), 373.

24 *Folkeskolen* 64 (1947), April 24, 240.

25 Henning Meyer, “Skolepsykologisk arbejde i Danmark” [Educational Psychology Work in Denmark], *Skola och Samhälle* (1944), 33–44.



middle school.<sup>26</sup> This request resulted in a large-scale scientific report published in 1929 that incorporated a number of German and British test items.

The Society for Experimental Pedagogy and the Educational Psychology Study Commission differed significantly in how they disseminated their respective data. While the society published mainly in its own periodical, the commission published in mainstream pedagogical periodicals with relatively large circulations. Thus, the dissemination strategy of the commission was far more successful. Meyer, in particular, was especially brilliant at communicating the results and possibilities of educational psychology to a broader public, including parents and teachers.<sup>27</sup>

This dissemination success of the commission was also rooted in its close connections with the teachers' unions. The commission continued to enjoy their support and made a great effort to cultivate a partnership with them. In fact, it was even popularly known as the "teachers' union's commission."<sup>28</sup> The teachers' unions became the clientele of the commission, with its ministerial backing and *de facto* monopoly on educational tests in Denmark. The commission was able to continue the fellowship of like-mindedness established in the days of the Society for Experimental Pedagogy. This fellowship was supported by being an outsider to the established system and having to strive to overcome opposition.

This sense of opposition and the fellowship of like-mindedness undoubtedly played an important role in the development and creation of the profession of educational psychologist. Moreover, there was a sense of optimism and confidence in the value of testing and that testing would eventually prevail. In fact, many members of the commission were not outsiders but, rather, people who held significant positions in society. Thus, it is fair to say that the commission, apart from an improved dissemination strategy, had a much better base for promulgating this strategy than the Society for Experimental Pedagogy ever had, especially considering some of the members of the commission and their arguments.

Headmaster Georg Julius Arvin had argued in the popular periodical *Vor Ungdom* that the work of the Educational Psychology Study Commission should be promoted since it would be able to meet society's demands for accountability.<sup>29</sup> Arvin continued the argument in an article in the 1929 Kronborg paper: "Through such [intelligence] tests it would be possible [...] to secure what our present-day community demands in regard to the school, i.e. subject knowledge in the elementary school subjects."<sup>30</sup>

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26 Rasmus Hans Pedersen and Henning Meyer, *Anvendelse af intelligensprøver ved optagelsesprøven til mellemskolen* [Using Intelligence Testing in the Entrance Exam for middle School] (Copenhagen, 1929), 1.

27 In a 1931 letter, the Frederiksberg School Director strongly urged the educational system staff to participate in a series of talks given by Meyer on intelligence testing. Letter from the school director to Frederiksberg's headmasters, dated January 15, 1931, Skolevæsenet [Education Archive] (EA), 1930–1931, Frederiksberg City Archives (FCA).

28 This name was used in a letter from the Frederiksberg School Director to the headmasters, dated December 18, 1930, EA 1930–1931, FCA.

29 Georg J. Arvin, "Samfundets krav til skolen" [Society's Demands for School], *Vor Ungdom* 51 (1929), 101–7.

30 Georg J. Arvin, "Lines of Development in the Danish School," in *Kronborg Magazine: The Fifth International Conference on New Education, Elsinore, August 1929*, London Institute of Education Archive, WEF III/186, 30.

Pedersen argued along much the same lines: that only standardised achievement tests could generate exact knowledge about the achievement levels of children.<sup>31</sup> Thus, Pedersen sought to address the issues of accountability, the business world's critiques of the public school system, and resource allocation. In a study with Meyer, the author concluded: "The school is unable to distinguish adequately between abilities and energy in the pupils. It needs a tool to support the immediate observation and in this regard, a system of intelligence tests will undoubtedly be very valuable."<sup>32</sup> This argument presents intelligence testing as a technology able to transcend traditional teacher evaluations and even standardised achievement tests. Simply put, intelligence tests were in another league.

Meyer argued that intelligence testing worked in all "cultured countries."<sup>33</sup> In specific relation to the professionalisation process, Meyer argued that "intelligence tests are not as easily handled a measuring instrument as many people think, and it should therefore be in the hands of professional psychologists."<sup>34</sup> This argument is a clear example of an attempt to distinguish and justify the profession of educational psychologist as a separate entity among educational professions.

The educational climate was much more receptive to these arguments in the 1920s than in the 1910s. Another important factor was the greatly improved national connections enjoyed by the commission compared with those of the society, as exemplified by the connection to the teachers' unions and the Ministry of Education. A third factor was the formal educational titles and formal positions held by many members of the Educational Psychology Study Commission. Together with the improved financial situation and comprehensive studies, the tests developed, and the successful dissemination and propagation strategy, it is beyond doubt that the Educational Psychology Study Commission contributed significantly to establish educational psychology as an independent professional field in Denmark.

### International trends and issues

On 17 March 1929, Meyer visited London and remained there for four months, studying the recently established child guidance clinics. The leading force in this work was the British educational psychologist Sir Cyril Burt (1883–1971), the world's first educational psychologist and known for his theory on hereditary intelligence (eugenics). In the autumn of that year, Burt published a series of articles with the title "Child Psychology and Its Application in Denmark and England". In these articles, Meyer explains the development of educational psychology in England and the United States, along with the results achieved using modern psychological methods and scientific intelligence tests. In light of these results, the author argued that Denmark should follow in the footsteps of England and the United States and promote the development and implementation of educational psychology and intelligence testing in the Danish public schools. It is noteworthy that the emergence of educational

31 Rasmus Hans Pedersen, "Standpunktsprøver og ministerielle prøver" [Proficiency tests and ministerial tests], *Folkeskolen* 48, no. 29 (1931), 501–2.

32 Pedersen and Meyer (1929), 75.

33 Henning Meyer, "Om standpunktsprøver" [About Proficiency Tests], *Vor Ungdom* 48 (1926), 37–50.

34 Henning Meyer, "Af studiesamlingens nyanskaffelser" [New Purchases of the Study Collection], *Vor Ungdom* 62 (1940), 90–5, 184–91.

psychology was associated with the hereditary theories of Burt. Apart from creating scientific legitimacy for intelligence testing, it also provided fertile ground for discussions about eugenics and social hygiene. The entry of educational psychology and intelligence testing – and thus also psychologisation – was promoted by international research, international organisations, and research trips such as Meyer's 1929 visit. However, where German psychologists had functioned as the main source of inspiration before 1914, British and American psychologists increasingly took their place after World War I. Thus, Meyer made copious references to Burt's work in his writings,<sup>35</sup> even commending Burt's work *The Young Delinquent*:

The book is a magnificent expression of what modern psychological measurements and other investigation methods are able to achieve. It is undoubtedly one of the most outstanding works in modern psychology, it can easily be read and arouse interest far beyond the circle of professional psychologists, and through the method and humane set of thinking animating the book, it will inspire the psychology of the future.<sup>36</sup>

Meyer's flattering remarks, his research trip to London, and his many references to the British psychologist testify to Burt's importance as a source of inspiration for the testing practice emerging in Frederiksberg in the 1930s. However, apart from the trips, many of the leading protagonists of Danish educational psychology organised the reform pedagogy environment, which also had clear international connections. In May 1926, the Danish section of the worldwide reform pedagogy organisation the New Education Fellowship was formed under the name *Den Frie Skole* [The Free School]. Educational psychological testing was included on the New Education Fellowship agenda because it was seen as a scientific way of overcoming the problem of examinations using objective educational measurement; testing had the potential to supplement or even replace examinations.<sup>37</sup> It was optimistically viewed as a solution for the future and was perceived as a far more just and efficient differentiation tool than examinations based on subjective teacher evaluations (Brehony, 2004, 749).<sup>38</sup> Educational psychology played into the norms and values of the child-centred reform pedagogy movement. Intelligence testing served several purposes: It was the ultimate individualisation of the educational system, it placed the child at the forefront, and it was seen as the only way of identifying the hidden potentials of the mentally disabled child.

Putting the child at the centre and revealing the child's hidden potential contributed to the creation of psychologisation. Inspired by Rose, psychologisation was therefore always a technology of power, because it instituted new expectations for how a child should act in school. Being a pupil now meant that blending into the background was no longer an option. Through individualised teaching, pupils were expected to utilise their skills and make their potential visible with a goal towards entering the labour market in the future.

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35 Ydesen (2011), 83.

36 Henning Meyer, "Børnepsykologien og dens Anvendelse i Danmark og England" [Child Psychology and Its Use in Denmark and England], *Folkeskolen* 46, no. 41 (1929), 713–6.

37 William Boyd, ed., *Towards a New Education* (London: A.A. Knopf, 1930), 270.

38 Kevin J. Brehony, "A New Education for a New Era: The Contribution of the Conferences of the New Education Fellowship to the Disciplinary Field of Education, 1921–1938," *Paedagogica Historica* 40, no. 5–6 (2004), 749.

International ideas and practices in applied psychology and intelligence testing were translated and adapted to Danish conditions. In his practice in Frederiksberg, beginning in the fall of 1935, Meyer even copied the British model, making arrangements with the psychiatric department of the Danish National Hospital that would enable him to refer children for a full-scale psychiatric examination, contingent on parental consent. However, these efforts often resulted in a comprehensive revision of international ideas and practices. A good example is the official Danish standardisation of the Binet–Simon intelligence test, published by the Educational Psychology Study Commission in 1930.

The 1930 Danish standardisation of the Binet–Simon intelligence test covered children aged 3–15 years and included five questions and a reserve item for each age group. However, the test differed significantly from the original French test battery, since a number of test items and test types from other sources were incorporated into the Danish test battery. In fact, just over half of the 78 test items originated from the French battery.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, the 1930 Danish Binet–Simon intelligence test can be described as a compilation of Binet–Simon’s and Terman’s test items (Stanford–Binet), along with the work of seven other psychologists. This clearly reflects a desire to find and use the best test items available, but this also meant that what the 1930 Danish Binet–Simon intelligence test measured was a hodgepodge of different abilities perceived to be linked with what the eight different test designers arbitrarily believed was intelligence. Thus, the epistemological contribution of the Danish Binet–Simon test was rooted solely in the comparative element of standardisation and not in a coherent theoretical understanding of intelligence.

### **The dividing practices of educational psychology**

Having examined the ascent of Danish educational psychology through an analysis of the four key historical trends, it is now useful to look at the specific school psychological examination in Frederiksberg, including the corresponding records and differentiation of students legitimised by the psychologisation. The establishment of the educational psychologist’s office, the introduction of IQ testing, and the related psychological files of students provide an image of a period of measurement in schools during which IQ testing was decisive in decisions to transfer students to the remedial school.

### ***The distinction between undisciplined and less gifted students***

Which students were targeted for educational psychological analysis? In the article “The Educational Psychologist at Work” (August 1943), Meyer distinguished between students who appeared to be difficult or undisciplined and those less gifted,<sup>40</sup> with the former group called problem children and the latter learning-disabled children. Problem children had a range of “behavioural problems” such as tendencies towards “mendacity”, “disobedience”, and “bad sexual behaviour”. The learning disabled children were characterised by understimulated development of their intelligence or “special defects”, but various social factors also played a role in how these

39 Harald Torpe, “Sofie Ribbjerg og intelligensprøverne” [Sofie Ribbjerg and the Intelligence Tests], *Dansk Pædagogisk Tidsskrift* (1986), 276–7.

40 Henning Meyer, “Skolepsykologen arbejder” [The Educational Psychologist at Work], *Folkeskolen* 60 (1943), 603.

disabilities developed. To distinguish between difficult and problem children and those who were considered to have learning disabilities was complicated in practice. In particular, the problem children represented a challenge: "Such children the psychologist examines and treats in cooperation with a psychiatrist; the two examinations, the psychiatrist's and the psychologist's are equally necessary, and you never know in whose field of expertise the cause is to be found."<sup>41</sup>

The distinction between the less gifted and those considered problem children was also reflected in the way in which the two knowledge disciplines – psychology and psychiatry – prescribed different kinds of solutions for the two groups of children.<sup>42</sup> In an analysis of the emergence of social services and institutions, Kirsten Nøhr describes the 1930s as a period when the problem child became visible to the authorities.<sup>43</sup> This child bounced between different linguistic labels, such as difficult, morally degenerate, and perhaps psychopathic. The problem child was, so to speak, difficult to categorise and likewise difficult to place appropriately.

It was these children who often ended up in types of institutions considered a "home" rather than an institution.<sup>44</sup> The distinction between a gifted and a problem child was manageable from an educational psychologist's point of view. By making this distinction, educational psychology secured its position as a discipline, including various technologies such as intelligence testing and the students' records. Both educational psychology and child psychiatry emerged as disciplines during the period and, with their scientific legitimacy, offered an alternative to previous disciplinary solutions such as punishment, seclusion, and confinement.<sup>45</sup>

### *The educational psychology examination*

The following section takes a close look at educational psychology practice, including how the educational psychologist determines how a child is defined as a psychological individual. Following this, we discuss the construction of normality inherent in the affiliated educational psychology journals. The Frederiksberg City Archive contains 125 pupils' journals from the period 1930–1945.<sup>46</sup> These files comprise the records of children – boys and girls – born in 1920, 1929, and 1930 and contain the case file of each individual child with a filled-in standard form of transfer and all the notes written by professionals about the child in question. All the files contain three types of documents: the normal school's notification form, an IQ test from an educational psychologist, and the student's file from the remedial school. These are the main documents, but the files also contain other documents like letters and sometimes other writings from professionals or the municipalities.<sup>47</sup> The normal school's notification form was designed to identify the student's problem behaviours

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41 Ibid.

42 Hamre (2012), 108.

43 Kirsten Nøhr, "Fra før verden gik i terapi – om behandlingsområdets opkomst" [From before the world went into therapy – about the rise of treatment], *Dansk Pædagogisk Tidsskrift* 5 (1992), 211.

44 Ibid., 213.

45 Hamre (2012), 135.

46 The files can be found at Elevkartotek, Skolen ved Solbjergvej, Værneskolen, EA, FCA, .

47 Some of the files also contained test results from the Psycho-Technical Institute, an institution designed to assess students' practical skills for future placement in the labour market. As a part of this assessment, the student had to make a proposal for a future occupation.

(academic problems, moral character, hygiene, and domestic conditions) and was a recommendation to the educational psychologist regarding transfer to the remedial school. The IQ test contained the student's measured intelligence quotient and age. In some cases, it was supplemented by brief descriptions of the student's character. The measurement would be the basis for the student's referral to remedial school. The student's file from the remedial school is documentation containing a description and evaluation of the student's problems, but it also advocates taking the student's perspective.

In a letter dated 4 March 1936 to the Frederiksberg schools, the school director promulgated detailed guidelines for educational psychological practice in Frederiksberg.<sup>48</sup> The parents of the child had to give their consent before the child's educational psychology examination. There was, however, a very important exception. In the event a child was recommended to the remedial school, an intelligence test was mandatory, even without parental consent.

For a child to be examined, the class teacher had to fill out a specific form and send it to the Educational Psychology Office. The form contained comprehensive information about the child: retention in the same class, non-attendance, health situation (medical information), achievement level (based on achievement tests and a teacher evaluation), grades, behaviour, appearance, hygiene, clothing, and family conditions.

After the examination, the school would receive a report of the results and the child's parents would be notified about the outcome, although this would be expressed in ordinary phrases and not as numerical results. In unclear cases, where the appropriate decision for treating the child was not obvious, the school director stated that it was prudent to repeat the examination (e.g. after one year) before a final decision was reached. Such children's reports should be marked NB (*nota bene*).

What emerges from the letter is that the *raison d'être* of educational psychology was its ability to diagnose the individual child. This testifies to a highly individualised practice being introduced into the educational system, but it is important to note that the child is only being individualised to the extent that the child differs from other children as a way of supporting and explaining the initially identified deviation. Moreover, it is striking how the letter reflects an already highly institutionalised practice and it is reasonable to presume that Meyer had a strong hand in the phrasing of the letter. Apart from these initial remarks, several points are also important to extract from the letter. First, the distinction between the different groups examined by the educational psychologist was rarely watertight. Since the starting point for any educational psychologist's examination was with the children from normal school, educational psychologists were very much the arbiters tasked with defining normality and deviance. Second, the term *NB children* was used by Meyer to denote children who would not be recommended for remedial education or another special institution right away. However, these same NB children were expected to possess abilities of self-normalisation and self-discipline, that is, they were expected to have the potential to improve. About 700 children each year fell into this category.<sup>49</sup> Third, the initiative for conducting a child's educational psychological examination came

48 Anniversary pamphlet: *Skolepsykologisk kontor Frederiksberg 1934–1959* (Frederiksberg, 1959), 8f.

49 *Ibid.*, 13.

from the teacher or, more rarely, the parents. If a teacher wanted a child examined by an educational psychologist, the parents' consent was to be obtained, a practice only in existence at Frederiksberg. The mindset was that educational psychological practice would benefit if parents were partners in the process. The only exception, as also mentioned in the letter, was if a child were about to be transferred to remedial school, in which case an educational psychology examination and intelligence testing of the child could take place without parental consent.<sup>50</sup>

On the day of the examination, the child was accompanied to the Educational Psychology Office by a parent or guardian. The educational psychologist would then interview the parent or guardian to obtain as much information about the child as possible to elucidate the domestic background of the child's difficulties.<sup>51</sup> Then the educational psychologist would conduct the actual examination.

According to Torpe, an educational psychologist serving under Meyer at Frederiksberg from 1942 on, a complete educational psychology examination of a child could consist of the following steps, depending on the situation:<sup>52</sup>

1. A performance test, for example, Healy's picture completion test, used to create a calm atmosphere;
2. The Binet–Simon intelligence test;
3. If necessary, Meyer's standardised tests from Gothenburg (only after 1945);
4. Performance tests, such as the Goddard–Seguin form board, Porteus' Maze Test, Woodworth–Wells' substitution test, cube imitation, cube construction, and Healy's construction test;
5. Standardised achievement tests from the Educational Psychology Study Commission;
6. In case of behavioural problems, the Rorschach test, the Murray Thematic Apperception Test, and the Duess test;
7. Observation of the child playing in a sandpit;
8. Conversation with the child in between tests; and
9. A diagnosis.

Although this procedure was described in 1949 and item no. 3 and the Duess test (published in 1940) did not exist in practice in the 1930s, the formula still provides an idea about the testing battery involved in an educational psychology examination at Frederiksberg in the 1930s because it shows the procedure and test battery developed by Meyer.<sup>53</sup>

The role of the Frederiksberg Educational Psychology Office remained a consultative one in relation to the transfer of children into remedial classes throughout 1930–1943.<sup>54</sup> Thus, a transfer presupposed a recommendation from the teacher, the educational psychologist, the headmasters of the sending and the receiving school, a medical check-up with the school doctor, and, finally, the transfer had to be appro-

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50 Meyer (1944), 37

51 *Ibid.*, 38f.

52 Torpe (1949), 86–99, 92f.

53 The Murray Thematic Apperception Test was first published in 1935.

54 *Skolepsykologisk kontor Frederiksberg 1934–1959* (1959), 12.

ved by the school director. However, based on the records of children transferred to remedial classes, a clear picture emerges that the educational psychologist's recommendations were nearly always followed.<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, it is clear that the role of intelligence and IQ played a vital part in the evaluation process. In the majority of his endorsements, Meyer mentioned the result of the IQ test as the sole determining factor.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, the IQ level was always indicated at the very top of the educational psychologist's endorsement. Finally, Section B of the comprehensive form for transferring a child to remedial school asked, "In what ways is the child's lack of intelligence evident?" This shows how the notion of intelligence was a key determining factor permeating the Frederiksberg educational system. It seems as if the role of the educational psychologist was merely to specify the IQ of the child in question.

This observation offers a glimpse into a practice that appears contrary to the descriptions of a comprehensive educational psychology evaluation process that prided itself on a holistic perspective and in which an IQ score would never function as the sole factor determining a child's transfer into remedial classes. Put another way, it appears that thoroughness and a comprehensive view devolved into pragmatism and succumbed to the attraction of quantification. This development might have been accelerated by Meyer's core value that children with the same level of intelligence should be placed together to achieve the best learning results.

In some cases, Meyer would notice that a child's poor reading ability had been a severe obstacle to the child's engagement with a test. Despite that, the IQ was still calculated and recorded in the child's files, although Meyer noted that the child in question had done very well on performance tests. In other cases, the notification form from the normal school did not contain any information other than Meyer's endorsements and those of the remedial school headmaster. This meant that only sporadic comments on the child's ability to spell and do arithmetic combined with an IQ number would have been decisive. In some cases, teachers would simply state under the heading "character traits that make the child unfit for the normal school" that "the educational psychologist regards him as unsuitable for the normal school", which is an example of the influence held by the educational psychologist.

It is remarkable how the role of intelligence testing was given a very prominent place in the annual accounts for the Frederiksberg educational system from 1934.<sup>57</sup> Since that year, comprehensive statistical information about the distribution of IQ levels in different classes was included in the municipal accounts, with the intelligence test results always indicated anonymously for the children being transferred to remedial classes. No other indicators were mentioned.

It is also clear that criteria other than IQ scores were involved in the overall evaluation process. In at least one case for which the intelligence test results could not support a transfer to remedial school, the results of achievement tests were used as justification instead. This was the kind of argument always used by the remedial school headmaster, who, in almost all cases, would recommend the transfer. In the few cases in which Meyer was inclined to keep the child in question in nor-

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<sup>55</sup> See footnote 46.

<sup>56</sup> Elevkartotek, Skolen ved Solbjergvej, Værneskolen, EA, FCA.

<sup>57</sup> Annual accounts about the Frederiksberg Educational System, 1932–1943, Frederiksberg.



mal school, with the addition of auxiliary assistance, the headmaster of the remedial school recommended a transfer to remedial school based mainly on the child's achievement level. On these grounds, the headmaster of the remedial school did not challenge the professional expertise of Meyer, who retained the intelligence test monopoly, but the difference of opinion reveals a strong focus on traditional school skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic in Frederiksberg.

### Children's files

This section focuses on the aforementioned 125 children's files from the Educational Psychologists office at Frederiksberg. Following Michel Foucault, writing documentation represents a historical practice that emerged by the end of the 18th century and spread to modern institutions such as schools, hospitals, and mental institutions.<sup>58</sup> This documentation offered two different but related possibilities: on the one hand, the production of the individual as an object and, on the other hand, the possibility of systematically comparing individuals in classrooms, schools, and in society as a whole.<sup>59</sup> The children's records are viewed in this perspective, not as neutral but as a technology producing certain individualities, setting standards for what is regarded as normal and as deviant. According to a constructivist approach, documents generate actions.<sup>60</sup> As a consequence of the external perspective on educational psychology outlined in the beginning of the article, testing and filing records meets certain needs of society. To sum up, a file is not a neutral document describing the nature of a child but, depending on the time and the context, it generates action. The Foucault-inspired approach is apparent in two ways: The referral of students to remedial school is seen as a documentation process, whereas each document serves as a step in the production of the student as a problem. The other part of the constructivist approach is the quantitative analysis of the categorisations of the pupils. The analysis has been carried out by constructing an archive of sentences and phrases applied in each file. An archive of sentences makes possible the consistence of the sources' different constructions of normality and deviance. As will be demonstrated, a problem child did not have a fixed label during the period, but depended on several different discourses and served various needs of society.

Evidence from the 1920s, when children with all sorts of problems were transferred to remedial school, seems to continue into the 1930s, but this time with a scientific stamp of approval. Drawing on the Foucault-inspired approach introduced above, an analysis of the three main types of documents of the file will be carried out (i.e. the normal school's notification form, an IQ test from an educational psychologist, and the student's file from the remedial school).<sup>61</sup>

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58 Foucault (2002).

59 Ibid., 207.

60 For further elaboration on the constructivist approach to analysing files, see Eivind Engebretsen, *Barnevernet som tekst: Nærlesning av 15 utvalgte journaler fra 1950- og 1980-tallet* (Oslo: Det humanistiske fakultet, 2006); Nanna Mik-Meyer, "Dokumenter i en interaktionistisk begrepsramme," in *Kvalitative metoder i et interaktionistisk perspektiv – interview, observationer og dokumenter*, eds. Margretha Järvinen and Nanna Mik-Meyer (Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2005).

61 As a consequence of this approach to language and word we have chosen not to refer to each single document of the file, whenever we cite a word, a phrase or a sentence. Another reason for not citing each document is that we consider this personal and private data of those documented.

### *The notification form of normal schools*

In the section of the normal school notification form titled “Does the child show characteristics that make him/her unfit for normal school and what are these?”, the most frequently mentioned characteristics were laziness, anti-social behaviour, inability to concentrate, antics, and disruptive behaviour. These characteristics meant that the teacher found the student to be a problem in class. The decision to refer a child was based on the child’s inability to function satisfactorily in the class. In this process, the educational psychologist played the role of a useful partner to the teacher in the exclusion of the problematic child. This interpretation is supported by the numerous social problems found among children referred to remedial school, as shown by the files. Some of the most common descriptions include the parents being frequently sick, the family having only one breadwinner, poor economic background, numerous siblings, and unemployment and these are always associated with a negative assessment of the child’s background. Thus, children with social problems – especially boys – are over-represented in the files. As we see, the construction of the student as problematic was heterogeneous and a result of various categorisations, not following a specific pattern.

Phrases such as *very awkward* and *impossible, at least hopeless with the other [students]* give the impression that the important thing was to establish workable and manageable categorisations to justify the referral to educational psychological testing. The determination that a student was problematic was based on an assessment of the student’s skills.

Statements concerning the student’s character and personality followed the assessments in the notification form. Again, these descriptions of the students provide a heterogeneous impression of what was considered problematic. The descriptions stemming from the files can be organised into five basic types:<sup>62</sup> 1) a quiet/nervous/vulnerable child with problematic family relationships, 2) an the unintelligent/immature child with poor skills, 3) a wild/lying/dangerous child who lacks morals, 4) an unsanitary/undisciplined child lacking body control, with unbridled sexuality, and 5) a child who does not understand what is being said to him/her, exhibiting behaviour interpreted as either incomprehensible, below average, mechanical, or even feeble-minded. Though this is, of course, a construction, these five types of problematic student identities functioned as parameters for regarding a student as normal or deviant. The assessments of student skills in the notification form were thus connected to an assessment of the student’s moral behaviour and character, both stressing the student as the problem.

### *The IQ test from the educational psychologist’s perspective*

The normal school notification form contained speculation about the student’s destiny and the psychological examination, with its measurement of the student’s IQ and intelligence age, supplied the speculation with scientific legitimacy. This examination introduced a language of professional expertise among the professionals in schools, closely drawing on the new insights and terminology surrounding the con-

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62 Bjørn Hamre, “Diagnosen som problematiseringsproces – set i en pædagogisk, skolepsykologisk og specialpædagogisk kontekst,” in *Diagnoser i specialpædagogik og socialpædagogik*, ed. Inge Bryderup (Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2011).

cept of intelligence: "Intelligence retarded but not significantly," "X lacks one year in intelligence development," or, as seen in this more comprehensive description: "He is absolutely reading retarded, but he is also mentally disabled when it comes to general intelligence. I believe that it is appropriate to have him referred to the remedial school." In addition to the professional terminology, there are personal descriptions, such as: "dependent on others and insecure" or "no initiative, very tired, ill, and relaxed" or "perception ability fairly good, quite normal, but the ability to understand, to work for a plan and stick to the plan is lacking." These descriptions reflect the changing demands of being a student but, unlike the terminology of normal school, they do not include moral characteristics such as "lack of discipline". The use of concepts such as skill, ability, and intelligence and the use of technologies such as testing and filing scientised the categorisation and differentiation of students. Following the inspiration of Rose, this was the first sign of psychologisation when it came to labelling the students' problems.

### *The children's files from the remedial school*

At the remedial school, a file was prepared for every student. Besides documenting a student's behaviour, this file's function was to consider the student's future career, especially when this career pointed towards manual labour. In case a student was not assessed as academically gifted, the student's potential practical skills needed to be taken into account, as long as the student was not seen as feeble-minded. Again, the problem described is a heterogeneous mix of students with common characteristics. The remedial school documents indicate at least five different constructions of student individuality: 1) "quiet, obedient, and servile," 2) "very close to being normal," 3) "quite reasonable, with some practical skills," 4) "strikingly preoccupied with sexual matters," or just 5) "clearly degenerate."<sup>63</sup> These constructions of problem behaviour represented the period's concept of normality and expressed the need to conduct a timely and appropriate sorting of the students. Those considered normally gifted, which most likely meant academically gifted, should be routed upwards in the educational system and those considered practically skilled should improve these skills, so that no skills are wasted. A skilled trencher could be valuable to society. Students considered to be morons or feeble-minded should be sorted out at remedial school and referred to larger institutions, so that they will not harm society. The teachers' assessments were led by this desire for sorting and exclusion.

The overall impression of the files is that the evaluation and recommendation of the Educational Psychologist Office, including the IQ test, are the key element in the overall student evaluation process.<sup>64</sup> As such, the norms and values in the evaluation process in Frederiksberg in the 1930s regarding the referral of students to remedial school were tied to notions of intelligence and IQ testing.

However, the prerequisite for the educational psychologist's examination was the label *problem child*, stipulated by the teacher in normal school. The psychological examination designated the student as an individualised psychological subject, including abilities and skills that can be measured and evaluated scientifically. The examination was thus extremely well suited to address the differentiation issues that

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<sup>63</sup> Hamre (2011).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

schools had to resolve in the period. The psychologisation of the school was initiated and in this first phase the main function was to organise and legitimise differentiation and individualisation.

There are at least three types of discourse in the files: 1) a school discourse expressing the expectations of the normal and remedial schools regarding the student's ability and moral behaviour, 2) psychological and psycho-technical discourse, with their two different kinds of testing, representing a desire for a scientific approach to differentiation in schools, and, finally, 3) a socio-political discourse that influences the other two and has the goal of sorting students and guiding them towards their future working life. All three discourses occurred in the process of referring the student from normal school to remedial school with IQ testing as the mediating legitimisation of the student's behaviour as problematic.

### **Conclusion: The role of psychologisation in schools**

How can the emergence of educational psychology be interpreted? We have argued that this emergence must be analysed in connection with a range of other phenomena: the need to differentiate a heterogeneous pupil group, a growing national and international development involving a desire to form and facilitate pedagogical experiments, the idea of social engineering intending to classify all members of society into their appropriate future track, and the idea of eugenics, which excludes those who could degenerate the population. The emergence of educational psychology should be analysed in light of this fear of population degeneration and a desire to optimise and streamline the school system. The IQ testing and filing of students were interventions with the aim of a population that ought to be regulated and differentiated for the sake of future generations.<sup>65</sup>

Educational psychology emerged as a regime of knowledge that would serve as a deterrent to society's concern for the population. The social rationale behind intelligence was part of a utilitarian and optimisation ideology and a risk calculation intending to reduce the unrestrained propagation of the less gifted in society. Intelligence testing was an effective way to discipline and systematise human deviation. The IQ testing prescribed a particular ideal of giftedness in school. The testing and filing were the foremost important technologies of the period. These technologies produced new individualities and distinctions between the gifted, the moderately gifted, and the less gifted. Intelligence was defined as a field for the educational psychologist, whereas children considered undisciplined were supposed to be subjects in the field of child psychiatry.

What sort of changes can be observed when it comes to the importance of educational psychology at present? At present, educational psychology has expanded with more advanced testing and filing technologies.<sup>66</sup> Following this perspective, psychology has gained hegemony as a regime of knowledge in the schools' differentiation processes and the construction of what is seen as normal. However, the hegemony is challenged by psychiatry and the technology of diagnosing.<sup>67</sup> According to the

65 Stephen Ball, *Foucault, Power, and Education* (London: Routledge, 2013), 68.

66 Bendixen (2006).

67 Svend Brinkmann, "Om psykiatiseringen af hverdagslivet og psykologien," *Psykologisk set* 28, no. 82 (2011), 82.

analytical perspective introduced in the beginning of the article, the technologies of differentiation cited were the most important in the early days. Educational psychology introduced scientised norms for students' expected behaviour.

Educational psychology introduced scientised standards of what it meant to be qualified as a student. Students were normalised and disciplined in relation to certain ideals, such as being quiet, obedient, and diligent. This is particularly evident in the files, which clearly show that teachers referred children who behaved noisily or restlessly to psychological examination. Giftedness was assumed to be something that could be measured and according to which a student's future position in society could be determined. Thus, there was something static about the way students' abilities were determined. They were assumed to be either "qualified", "perhaps qualified" or "not suitable". There was no a positive characteristic associated with being perhaps qualified. This simply meant that the endowment could not be determined.

At present, school and educational psychology relate to the concept of learning by expressing a qualitative difference in the concept of giftedness. Following Thomas Popkewitz, the widespread use of learning within education has to do with a cultural tendency to position the citizen as a "lifelong learner".<sup>68</sup> Unlike endowment learning, which aims to fulfil a student's potential, development is always seen as possible and the decisive role of educational psychology is not to legitimize the differentiation of students, but to let them redeem themselves as lifelong learners.<sup>69</sup> Educational psychology's current role is to mould the students as psychological individuals who are able to reflect upon themselves and take responsibility for their own development. According to Lynn Fendler's Foucault-inspired analysis, the historical hegemony of psychology in modern schooling can be captured in the notion of developmentality, naming a power that, drawing on the significance of developmental psychology in schooling, constructs the pupil as an object for constant psychological development, meeting present society's need for reflexive, flexible, and self-managing individuals.<sup>70</sup> Metaphorically, this can be expressed by saying that to be perhaps qualified is to be elevated to an ideal; as a student, one is always expected to be on track in a self-reflexive task with one's potential as a lifelong learner in a global society.

Learning and the potential associated with the term are important for the inclusive agenda that characterises contemporary school debate. When a student previously was excluded for special education, there was a degree of irreversibility to the process. This has changed compared to the present period, when the student, regardless of abilities, is elevated as a learning individual and therefore always a potential community participant. The role of educational psychology has changed to become more consultative and advisory when it comes to taking the student's perspective. The period when educational psychology emerged can be observed as the age of measurement, whereas the function of pedagogy and psychology nowadays is to shape and redeem the student's potential. The current psychologisation of school means that

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68 Thomas S. Popkewitz, *Cosmopolitanism and the Age of School Reform: Science, Education, and Making Society by Making the Child* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

69 For further elaboration on this perspective, see Bjørn Hamre, "Optimization as a Dispositive in the Production of Differences in Denmark Schools," *European Education* 45, no. 4 (2014).

70 Lynn Fendler, "Educating Flexible Souls. The Construction of Subjectivity. Through Developmentality and Interaction," in *Governing the Child in the New Millennium*, eds. Kenneth Hultqvist and Gunilla Dahlberg (London: Routledge Falmer, 2001), 8.

students are expected to optimise themselves as learning and flexible individuals.<sup>71</sup>

This expectation of an individual's flexibility does not happen primarily as a result of progressive educational respect towards the student as a unique individual, but because the educational and psychological practice is characterised by economic logic's need to produce adaptable and sociable students who are able to manage themselves as flexible and participating individuals in the future. In the earlier period, the primary role of educational psychology was to categorise and differentiate students. Presently, inclusion has become an ideal. The ideal of inclusion is justified as a top-priority educational solution, an effective security measure for society, and the political definition of the nation's competitiveness. It is no longer possible to just drop out of school. Those who previously dropped out or were discarded are now elevated to become participants and will also be required to demonstrate that they are so. The idea of inclusion ensures that everyone is seen as a learning individual and expected to manage their talent. The responsibility ultimately falls on the individual.

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71 Hamre (2012), 224.

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