The Intelligence Quotient is a Fractured Mirror

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Would you believe that a single test can significantly determine your child’s future? Well, unfortunately, it can. IQ tests such as the Stanford-Binet, the OLSAT, and the WAIS are substantially influencing parents and their children’s future. Moreover, this phenomena has been aggrandizing due to the utilization of IQ tests by highly selective schools comprising kindergartens to high schools. So what is so special about these schools? The simple answer is that an average of 36% of these schools’ graduates are admitted to Ivy League schools (Senior 1). Now, the predicament is that most of these selective schools stringently admit students at the age of five to their kindergartens. In other words, in order to apply to these schools the applicants have to be 4-year-olds and are required to take an IQ test. Despite the preposterousness of 4-year-olds taking IQ tests, a myriad of parents is zealous in selective schools and is trying everything they can to send their youthful children to selective schools. I indubitably believe that the IQ test is an inaccurate and defective reflection of people’s intelligence-- especially for 4-year-olds-- thus the IQ should not be utilized in assessing applicants for selective schools.

To start off, intelligence is immense and innumerable and therefore is impossible to be evaluated by a single test. Howard Gardner, Hobbs professor of Cognition and Education in Harvard Graduate School of Education, has disputed against the idea that intelligence is a single entity that can be measured simply via IQ tests. Moreover, Gardner devised an enumeration of the seven aspects in intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, artistic, spatial, social, and personal adjustment (Gardner 41-43). However, the preponderance of IQ tests simply focus on the linguistic, logical-mathematical, and spatial aspects of intelligence-- which is severely inadequate for a test asserted to measure intelligence. In addition, Walter Lippmann an American intellect and an awardee of two Pulitzer Prizes, undermined the IQ tests by stating “We cannot measure intelligence when we have not defined it.” Hence, Lippmann is depicting IQ tests as fruitless assessments due to the indeterminate definition of intelligence. Would you want your children to be evaluated by a test with fallible and vague purposes? Or worse, would you want that test to have a pivotal impact to your children’s future? I don’t think so, everyone desires equity and rational assessments. Inevitably, the ambiguity in the definition of intelligence evidently portrays the fallibility and insufficient elements of the IQ test.

Additionally, the IQ test is preparable and the IQs are crucially influenced by the environment. In other words, children living in a studious environment with ample support will unquestionably have a higher IQ-- which demolishes the purpose of IQ tests. Surprisingly, there are competitive parents who prepare their 4-year-olds for the exams (Senior 3). Expensive test-prep kits and high-end education consultancies began to proliferate as these parents are willing to spend thousands of dollars for the “kindergarten entrance exam preparation”. Suzanne Rheault, M.I.T graduate and the founder of one of the most popular education consultancies, stated that “I (Rheault) can understand people getting offended by 4-year-olds getting tutoring for these exams” and admitted the absurdity of preparing 4-year-olds for kindergarten entrance exams. On the other hand, environment is a decisive factor in a child’s IQ. Children with abundant interactions and exposures with adults’ intelligences tend to have a superior intellectual development. For an example, a scrutinization was made to two congregations of children who lived in two divergent environments. Momentarily after their birth, one group of children was raised by poorly educated parents while the other group of children was raised by much better educated parents. Years later, the children raised by poorly educated parents averaged an IQ of 95 while the children raised by better educated families averaged an IQ of 109 (Richwine 4). Thus, the stunning 14 point gap in the IQs of these two groups of children irrefutably reflects the crucial influence of environment to the IQ scores. IQ tests evaluate “intelligence”-- which is supposedly an innate ability-- and selective schools require IQs in order to perceive the potential aptitude of the applicants. However, with the devious preparation and influence from the environment makes the IQ test inequitable and therefore the IQ test is not an adequate assessment for students.

Last but not least, the fluctuation of the IQ certainly subverts the admission processes of selective schools and the validity of the IQ test. These instabilities of the IQ are reflected in the change in time and in the variety of IQ tests. David Lohman, a psychologist at the University of Iowa, substantiated the lability of intelligence in his co-authored paper “Gifted Today but Not Tomorrow?” by signifying that only a stunning 45% of the students who received a 130 or higher on the Stanford-Binet would do so on other similar IQ tests. Therefore, the substantial fraction of the students with differing IQs in various tests represents the unreliability of the IQ tests in general. On the other hand, the IQ significantly fluctuates as a student develops and gets older. Only a quarter of the 4-year-olds who received an IQ of 130 or higher would do so again as 17 year olds-- when they graduate high school (Senior 3). Due the predominance of the students with a fluctuation in their IQs, IQ tests are not accurate and thus are not a reliable source for assessing students-- especially for 4-year-old children with more potential time for fluctuation. Would you think it’s fair if your child fails to attend one of the selective schools due to his/her low IQ but then receives a high enough IQ qualifying for those school a couple years later? On this account, the ambiguity and fluctuations of IQs undermines the dependability of IQ tests used for assessment.

People may still dispute with me and affirm that IQ tests are the most valid assessment for intelligence and that selective school’s utilization of IQ tests is completely reasonable for 4-year-olds. In this case, I firmly believe that these selective schools should allow applicants from all ages to apply to their schools. Simply extending the age requirement can bring equity and stability since the applicant’s change in IQ is taken into account before the applying to the schools. Most importantly, there will be less absurdity of 4-year-olds having to prepare for theses IQ exams while most of the results are flawed.

In conclusion, IQ tests should immediately be eliminated from the application process for selective schools. This fallible exam is severely limited in measuring our intelligence, can be deviously prepared, and have fluctuating results to bring inequity in the application process. Imagine your 4-year-old child taking these futile exams when they should be having their own fun-- they should be playing with blocks instead of arranging them into specific sequences.

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