

TEACHERS` ATTITUDE TOWARDS GIFTEDNESS

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Abstract: Concerns related to giftedness and the educators` role in giftedness have been and still are a topic of interest for both researchers and practitioners. Contemporary definitions of giftedness are focused on the psychological profile of the gifted child which involves certain behaviours. All researchers concerned with the issue of giftedness state that giftedness has innate characteristics; intelligence is mandatory but not sufficient in achieving results. Other important aspects are also relevant in striving for performance. The teachers` open, proactive attitude plays an important role. They need to treat children according to their own individuality and they should use the most effective teaching resources that would stimulate the child`s innate potential.

Keywords: gifted, teachers attitudes, stimulate, innate potential, quality of teaching

1. Heredity, educability, social environment

The issue of giftedness and its numerous theories is an important matter presented by Sternberg & Davidson, 2005; Horowitz, Subotnik, & Matthews, 2009; Papierno, Ceci, Makel, & Williams, Sternberg & Kaufman, 2011 for a very long time. There are various theories of giftedness; however they are not conclusive yet. The issue is still up-to-date, under research and inquisitive. Researchers still try to answer the question of what giftedness is and identify methods to stimulate it. It is stated that giftedness as innate ability requires educational interventions that would lead to development. So how can we interfere, by what means, with what methods and what environment favours the development of the potential shown by the gifted? Another question refers to the intervention period, when should one interfere so as to develop the potential of the gifted, what is the most appropriate age for intervention? The opinions are different; some specialists support the idea of early intervention because "giftedness can be viewed as developmental, in that in the

beginning stages, potential is the key variable” (Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, and Worrell (2011). Other specialists believe that giftedness is a static quality (e.g., Lohman & Korb, 2006; Simonton, 2005). The different perception ways are determined by the difference between giftedness and talent. Giftedness is an asynchronous development, which blends advanced cognitive abilities of high intensity to create an internal experience and an illumination which is quality different from the common norm. Intelligence is not only an ability to acquire and process information, ability to reason and solve problems. It also involves various types of innate abilities. Cognitive psychology and neuropsychology stress out a new evidence, namely that intelligence is mostly determined by neurological efficiency. Intelligence is also determined by the rate of adjustments which involve good understanding and problem solving skills and strategic adaptation. The later involves cognitive flexibility according to concrete problem solving situations. (Blackwell, L. S., Trzesniewski, K. H., & Dweck, C. S. ,2007) Sternberg, (1991) started from the idea that intelligence depends on simple, cognitive operations but it is not identified with them. Thus, he focused on the discovery of complex cognitive components of intelligence and identifies three main components of intelligence:

- meta-components (processes of high complexity which occur in planning, management and decision making);
- performance components (as means or procedures subordinated to strategies of solution identification);
- information acquisition components (which occur in collecting, combination and selective comparison of information).
- Individual differences in people`s intellectual activity occur due to the way cognitive components and processes function, their speed and abilities. R.J. Sternberg identifies three forms of intelligence:
 - analytical intelligence;
 - creative intelligence;
 - practical intelligence.

New findings in the field of psychology highlight the aspect that intelligence is not unitary and it cannot be described by a number. It is multidimensional and has multiple sides. It is not easy to make a clear distinction between being intelligent and lacking intelligence. A more appropriate statement can be done when reference is made to the specific manner in which a person is intelligent. A person can be intelligent in one direction and have shortcomings in other directions Sternberg, R. J., &

Davidson, J. E. (Eds.). 2005). (Sternberg & Davidson, 2005 and Sternberg, 2005),

Talent is a person`s ability to show superior efficiency in a specific activity in a field of human behaviour like academic, technical, artistic, relational areas with positive results on a social level.

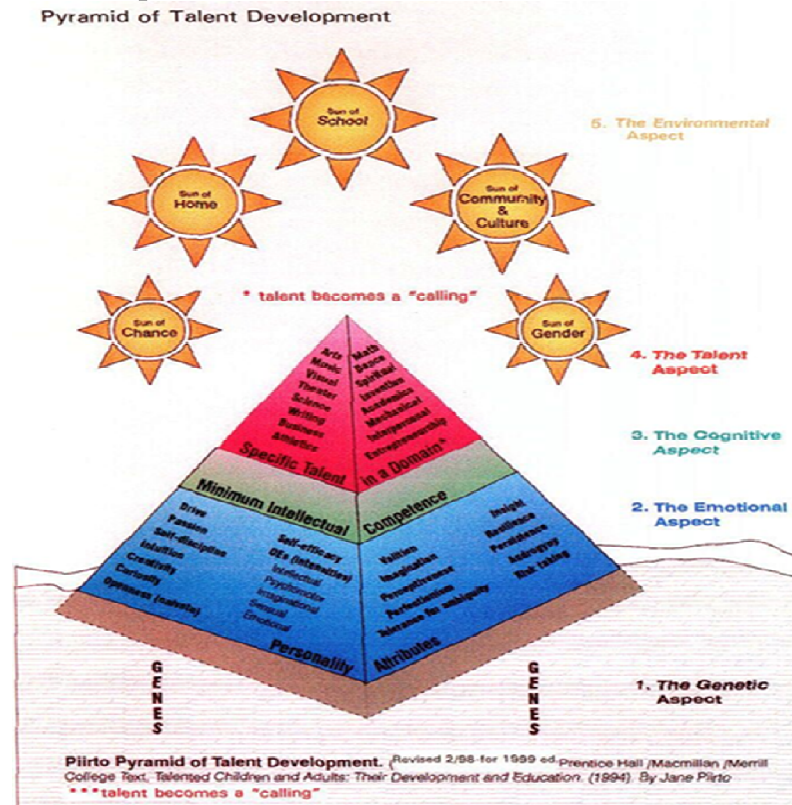


Figure no I.2.- Jane Piirto`s Pyramid of Talents
 (personal.ashland.edu/~jpiirto/Piirtopyramid.htm)

Some researchers consider that genetics favours giftedness; recent studies in genetics reveal that giftedness is mostly determined by innate cognitive abilities (Plomin et al., 2008). Research on the volume and dimension of brain have led to certain considerations on the correlation between the quality of cognitive abilities and the brain dimension (Haier, Jung, Yeo, Head, & Alkire, 2004).

Although numerous genetic studies have been conducted in the attempt to identify the exact genes which influence giftedness (Tsankova, Renthal, Kumar, & Nestler, 2007), the conclusions tend to reveal that there are certain epigenetic determinations in giftedness. The educational environment can influence epigenetics through proper stimuli. The prerequisites of a harmonious human being involve the relationship with the education and the need to seek education. Education is that feature of human beings which makes them sensitive to positive influences of

education with its multiple training perspectives. It includes that function of education which converts into the human being's ability of self-education and of being educated. In psycho-pedagogy, the notion of education is associated to the following connotation: the potential of human training under the influence of environmental or educational factors (Gavrila-Ardelean, M., Moldovan, O.D., 2014). A socio-pedagogical definition refers to giftedness as the human being's availability (or ability) of being responsive to educational influences (organized or not) and thus acquire progressive acquisition which would be visible in his socio-individual behaviour. The phenomenon of educational action is extremely complex; besides the human beings' availability of education or self-education, there are also numerous side factors which act upon the trainee/learner in various efficiency degrees. Educators-teachers should know whether the person (learner) can be ranked in the category of educable or non-educable people and the extent to which external factors are compatible with internal ones. A person's chance of placing him/herself under the influence of education depends also on how effective is the educational action offered by the subject of education but also by the educational relationship between educator and learner. It is states that: *education is both a human and a social relationship between educator and learner; relationship in which the first one aims for the intentional change of the second according to a well-defined goal.* Coherent and unitary educational influences presented by the family, school, social environment and the community, the ethno-community and the national community become important factors in the development and shaping of human personality. Genetics, heredity interact in a complex manner under the influence of education. They bring about educational consonance and dissonance leading towards various degrees of adaptation or lack of adaptation. Educational environment can be an appropriate pedagogical environment if there is a coherent set of educational influences adapted to the children's individual development level and age characteristics. For the gifted, the pedagogical environment involves aspects specific to their defining features, which educational styles need to take into consideration.

2.Methods

I have designed a questionnaire based on Gagné and Nadeau's model (1991) *Opinions about the Gifted and Their Education* to determine the teachers' attitude towards giftedness and the gifted. I have used it to assess the teachers' attitude towards giftedness. The questionnaire has been applied to a number of 100 preschool teachers who work in preschool education and a number of 100 students enrolled

in Bachelor studies in Pedagogy of preschool and primary school education.

The questionnaire consists of the following items:

1. What do you know about giftedness?
2. Define giftedness.
3. Define talent.
4. Mention some articles or books you have read on giftedness.
5. Have you encountered gifted children in your class?
6. How have you realised that they are gifted?
7. How do you identify the gifted?
8. What should be done in the classroom to identify the gifted?
9. Are the gifted stimulated at school?
10. What are your proposals to stimulate and develop the potential of the gifted?

I will assess the answers on a ranking scheme with 5 for a correct answer, 3 for a satisfactory answer and 0 for an unsatisfactory answer. The answers provided by the questionnaire are very good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory.

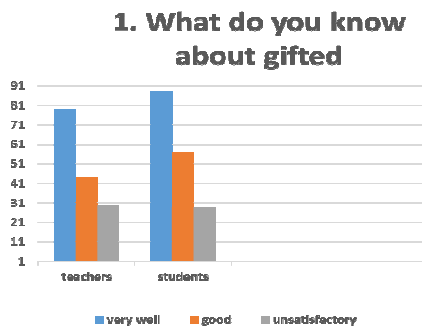


Figure 1. Question 1

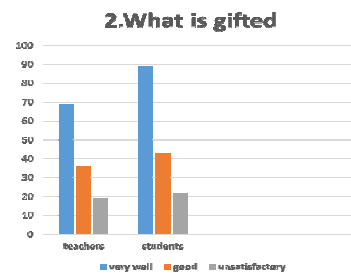


Figure 2. Question 2

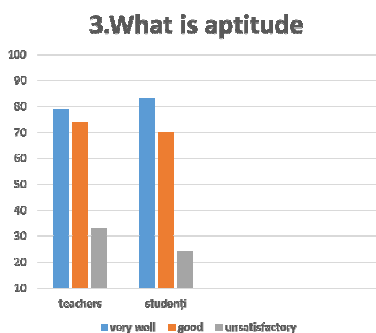


Figure 3. Question 3

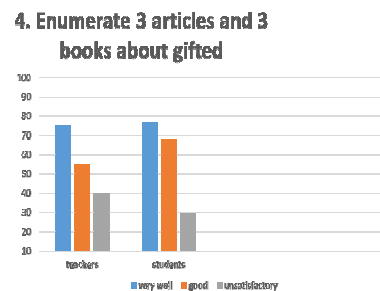


Figure 4. Question 4

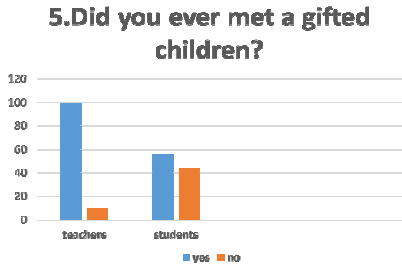


Figure 5. Question 5

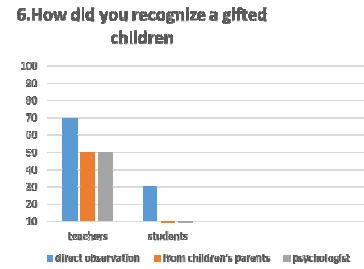


Figure 6. Question 6

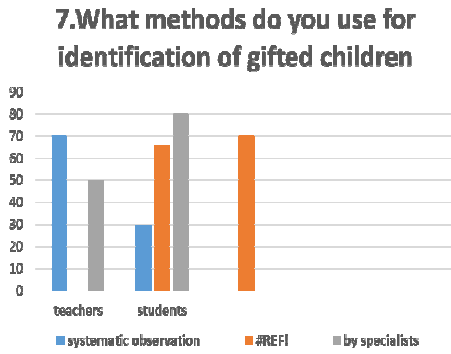


Figure 7. Question 7

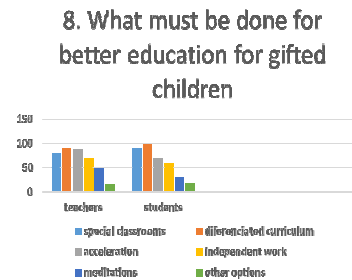


Figure 8. Question 8

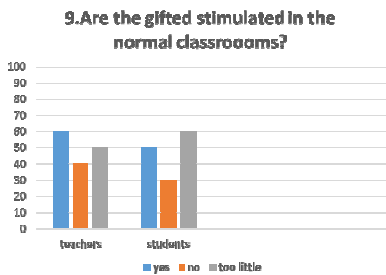


Figure 9. Question 9

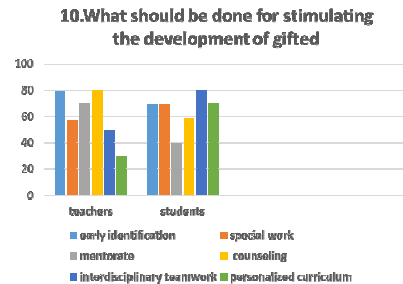


Figure 10. Question 10

Table 1.
Opinions about the Gifted and Their Education

Table 1. Opinions about the Gifted and Their Education (1 = very well; Item 2= good; Item 3 = unsatisfactory).

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	% Item 1	% Item 2	% Item 3
• What did you know about gifted	2.18	1.19	5	10	85
• What is gifted (define)	4.33	1.19	41	36	23
• What is aptitude (define)	4.93	1.2	58	33	9
• Enumerate 3 articles and 3 book about gifted	1.43	20	21	59	15
• Did you ever met a gifted children	2.56	1.44	16	9	75
• How do you recognize a gifted children	3.16	1.54	29	10	61
• What methods do you use for identification a gifted	4.87	1.3	64	22	14
• What should be done for better education	3.47	1.52	33	14	53
• Are the gifted stimulated in a normal classroom	4.35	1.29	45	27	28
• What should be done for a better education	3.34	1.38	21	27	52

3. Academic interpretation

As we see by the interpretation of the questionnaires most of the teachers and students were aware about the importance of early identification and education of the gifted children by using a large number of methods on order to help the gifted children to achieve academic performance. A clear majority (89%) have knowledge about gifted and their characteristics. Between teachers and students, future teachers are not significant deference. These educators were worried that gifted children would miss instruction in key study skills (88%). A large majority (95%) did believe that it is necessary to improve the system of education considering gifted children as important as the majorities of children, although about one third (25%) were undecided about whether methods would find it easy to master the education of the gifted.

4. Conclusions

Deep knowledge of the psycho-pedagogical profile of the gifted (different from the one of the others) is mandatory in the work with the gifted. Knowledge of their profile brings about the use of investigation methods which would facilitate the identification of the gifted.

It is essential to identify gifted children at early ages. Once they are identified, they need a special educational approach, strategies adapted to their psycho-pedagogical profile which are different from those used in mainstream education. The aim of such strategies is to develop the children`s giftedness. The development of the gifted according to their innate giftedness requires a personalized training programme which involves coherent pedagogical actions. These actions will identify and blend methods, procedures and teaching techniques

according to the needs of the gifted. This personalized training programme has to be applied based on a special school curriculum which is developed around the interests of the gifted. The syllabi should be developed by highly experienced teachers with outstanding results in education. The teaching staff's competence and attitude are key factors in the development of the gifted. Teachers working with the gifted need special training and attitude, thus a selection is mandatory. Competence in working with the gifted involves besides a good knowledge of their psycho-pedagogical profile, also vocation and good professional training, professionalism and thorough knowledge acquired in training stages.

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