

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF GIFTED CHILDREN

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Abstract: Giftedness is a multidimensional phenomenon that despite numerous studies and different approaches remains under explored. It is known that there are different views about gifted children in psychological theory and practice. Giftedness represents general intellectual ability, general creative ability, productive and creative ability, the sum of specific skills, the ability of thinking, specific area of intelligence and creativity.

Gifted child is a child who has above average skills and specific characteristics, which play an important role in the growth, development and education of these children. Researchers confirm the importance of early socialization, family and the primary teachers in the continually development of the gifted child on intellectual, social, emotional and somatic plan.

It is known that gifted child has specific characteristics and properties, such as originality, individuality, emotional stability, a high degree of intellectual capacity, independence, verbal fluency and perfectionism.

Development and manifestation of creativity in gifted children depends of their cognitive component, personality traits, motivation. Gifted child early showed a specific interest in a particular area.

This kind of child has a positive self-image, high self-esteem, self-confidence, high goals, a sense of self-worth, greater independence, which manifests across the non-conformism and initiative.

Every child deserves the special attention of parents, school and society, especially a gifted child, which is a child with special needs about their average ability and special educational needs.

Keywords: gifted child, creativity, personality traits, psychological characteristic.

1. INTRODUCTION

All children have unique strengths and talents. However, some children have

particularly advanced or well-developed skills and abilities in one or more areas. Such children may be referred to as gifted and talented.

In the gifted and talented field, attempts to define giftedness from a conceptual viewpoint have resulted in little consensus, because it is very difficult to define what giftedness is. General giftedness represents general intellectual ability, general creative ability, productive and creative ability, the sum of specific skills, the ability to use the process of thinking, specific area of intelligence and creativity (Sattler, J.M., 2002)

L Koren (1990) defines giftedness as a kind of complex of traits, skills, motivation and creativity, which allows individuals to excel above the average score in some domain of human activity, so that product, can be recognized as a new and original contribution to the field.

However, over the time, there are some new concepts which helped to determine some general knowledge of the nature of giftedness. One of them is that, giftedness is not the result of one characteristic, but a combination of more qualities – the ability and personality.

The U.S. Department of Education and a majority of state departments of education and school systems described gifted and talented children as those who demonstrate high achievement or potential in any one of six areas: general intellectual ability, specific academic attitude, creative or

productive thinking, leadership ability, visual and performing arts and psychomotor ability.

On the other hand, giftedness is not necessarily manifest only with productive or creative ability; because we can discuss it as a potential, latent basis, which will be supported by the environment, stimulating and nurturing, developing into a some form of talents (Ferbežer, J., 2005).

So it is generally accepted that a gifted child would have the potential to perform at a level that is significantly beyond that of the majority of other children of the same age, in one or more skill areas such as language, problem solving, physical or interpersonal skills. A gifted child has the potential to become for example a great writer, thinker or artist. This child not only has this potential, but is developing the skills to perform at this advanced level. Some researchers reviewed the importance of socio-cultural factors in the development of potential talent in young people, such as higher education, better socio-economic status, harmonious relationship between parents and their continued support children in their intellectual activities and successes (Winner, E., 2000).

2. THE TERM "GIFTED CHILD"

Within the concept of giftedness bind some terms which sometimes indicate a very clear difference. Therefore, we can discuss about the gifted child, genius, talent.

Giftedness is generally, considered to come from both nature (heredity) and nurture (the environment). It is known that gifted children need to be raised in an interactive and stimulating environment.

The role of environment begins to influence a child's development before birth and during the birth. The first four and five years of a child's life are especially important in determining his or her later development. An enriched environment offers

gifted children additions stimulation experience and interaction to meet their particular needs.

Gifted child's behavior has certain characteristics that can develop into a genius creator. At the same time, these signs are numerous, occur early and often, mainly related to the presence of high intellectual ability or specific abilities (Siegel, D., 2000).

These children can be gifted in many different areas which, include:

- verbal/language (e.g. writing, speaking or reading ability),
- logical and mathematical (e.g. number and classification),
- visual and performing arts (drawing, painting, musical ability),
- body/movement/psychomotor ability (e.g. dance),
- interpersonal (e.g. communication, leadership ability),
- intrapersonal (e.g. reflexive, self-sufficient ability).

While most gifted children, have harmonious social relationships with other children and generally are adequate social maturity, some studies suggest the presence of social and emotional problems in a group of gifted with an IQ of 120 or more (Koren, L., 1990). Presumably, as the top causes of these problems are inconsistent between the major development opportunities for these children and normal school requirements, then in their specific relationships with parents and peers, especially when they are present inadequate family relationships.

Failure of gifted and their difficulties can contribute with the school curriculum, rigid requirements and concerns in education, insufficient incentives of teachers. Research indicates that because of the importance of providing gifted children with appropriate, support and stimulator from an early age, it follows that they need to be identified as early as possible if they are to reach their developmental potential (Dauber, S.L., 1990). Identifying children's giftedness can be a difficult task, partly be-

cause of the many forms giftedness are not always easy to see in early childhood (Bow, S.M. @ Owen, S.V., 2004): So now is very clear why is the great importance of early identification of gifted children, as well as the creation of conditions in the family and in school to be able to properly develop.

3. COGNITIVE, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF GIFTED

Number of psychological theories and research confirmed the importance of intellectual and nonintellectual factors for the development and manifestation of giftedness.

Thus, the personal traits that contribute the development of gifted, the greatest importance to attach to the specific motivation for the work, which has been shown by gifted individuals. It includes a specific commitment to the task, taking risks, taking a future perspective, anticipation and planning. This is supported by findings in practice. When teachers describe gifted individuals, they often report that they always work faster, better, successfully then before. These children show gender-specific interests in an area, which is visibly in their fascination with a problem and its solution, the high curiosity and great enthusiasm in their work. They show great energy for work with a clear need for success (Cross, T.L., Coleman, L.J. @ Stewart, R.A., 1995).

However, the giftedness depends not only of the cognitive or intellectual factors; also the social and emotional aspects of development are very important. Gifted children may have some special needs in one or more aspects of their development and many experiences with special stresses and difficulties. Some of them are:

- extra pressure from parents and teachers to be continually successful,
- increased fear of failure when they are not "successful",

- developing high demands and expectations of others,

- frustration caused by having skills at different stages of development,

- difficulties relating to other children at the same age and finding same age friends.

As a separate entity, the gifted are prone to take risks, are more sensitive to the expectations and feelings to others, very early show idealism and sense of justice, independent and competitive. They have a tendency for perfectionism, self-criticism. Their interpersonal problems related with their self-concept, self-esteem, self-acceptance, all of which leads to the development of healthy coping strategies or to those dysfunctional maladaptive (Margolis, H. @ McCabe, P. P., 2006).

The literatures on depression support a correlation between high IQ and depression among children (Baker, K. E., 1997). All empirical studies examining depression among gifted children has found that they have high levels of depression than their non-gifted peers (Mash, E. J. @ Barkley, R. A. (Eds.), 1996).

Personality theorists have suggested that management of anxiety plays a primary role in a positive adjustment. Dirkes (1993) suggested that anxiety might be more prevalent among gifted children. "Although all children are faced with anxiety, the gifted must often deal with it at younger ages than other children and with a keener sense of the possibilities open to them". She added that gifted children's anxiety may be proportional to be acceptance they receive for their unique abilities and to the coping skills they can use. Also she suggested that this anxiety may accumulate and become more manifest during adolescence.

On the other hand, some empirical studies suggest that gifted children are better adjusted than their non-gifted peers are. It is clear that giftedness protect them from maladjustment; that the gifted are capable of greater understanding of self and others due to their cognitive capacities and come

better with stress, conflicts, and developmental disharmony (Parker, W., 1996). But the other group of researchers support that gifted children are "more" at risk for adjustment problems than their non-gifted peers, because giftedness increases a child's vulnerability to adjustment difficulties (Mash, E.J. @ Barkley, R. A. (Eds.), 1996). These children are more sensitive to interpersonal conflicts and experience; greater degrees of alienation and stress than their peers.

Also giftedness is risk of psychosocial isolation, because extremely gifted children viewed themselves as more introverted, less socially accept and more inhibited. They think that their peers saw them as much less popular, less socially active and less active in leading the crowd. So the gifted children's social and emotional problems are closely related to their level of giftedness.

4. CONCLUSION

The impact of giftedness on psychological states has been examined as a dichotomous question: "Are gifted children more or less at-risk for psychological problems than their non-gifted peers?"

The research suggests that the psychological characteristic of gifted child is related to the type of giftedness, the educational fit, and the child's personal characteristics such as self-esteem, temperament and lifespan (Dole, S., 2000). The available research on anxiety, depression, and isolation in academically or intellectually gifted students results the notion that these children are at risk for problems with adjustment.

Therefore, the early identification of gifted children with some psychological problems is very important. They need to be identified as early as possible if they are to reach their developmental potential. Identifying children's giftedness can be a difficult work; partly because of the many giftedness can take. In addition, many

forms of giftedness are not always easy to see in early childhood.

The identification of gifted children with some psychological problems has received increasing attention in recent years. These children are based on clinical practice and professional treatment. In addition, for the gifted and talented child is very important to recognize his/her educational, social and emotional needs by their teachers who will do some things for them, like this:

- being placed with other children in the classroom
- being able to work, in one or more subject areas, at a level which is more advanced than that of other children their age
- extracurricular activities and competitions
- acceleration, enrichment and extension in their education
- report more positive feelings regarding themselves and others and perceive themselves to be cognitively more competent in school tasks
- prefer their intellectual peers to their chronological-age peers.

So teachers and parents of gifted and talented children need to respond consistently to their children's individual needs and interests to help them to develop skills needed to relate to friends who are not to be gifted and talented or to talk with child that being gifted is not an excuse for bad behavior and risk for social and emotional problems.

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