



DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN
POTENTIAL: INVESTMENT INTO OUR
FUTURE

Proceedings of the 8th Conference of the
European Council for High Ability (ECHA)
Rhodes, October 9-13, 2002

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Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	7
-----------------------	---

A. PERSONAL TALENT, INTELLIGENCE AND SPECIAL ABILITIES

Sidney M. Moon <i>Developing personal talent</i>	11
---	----

Daniela Ostatníková, Zdenek Putz, Jolana Laznibatová, Monika Dohnányiová, Janette Okkelová and Karol Pastor <i>Salivary testosterone levels in children: Relation to their IQ scores</i>	22
--	----

Heidrun Stöger and Albert Ziegler <i>Living in harmony? Causes of deviation among different indicators of giftedness</i>	30
---	----

George Manolitsis <i>Predicting high reading ability from kindergarten: The role of metalinguistic skills</i>	34
--	----

Anne McKeough and Randy Genereux <i>Transformations in narrative thought during late childhood and adolescence: A comparison of average and exceptional story writers</i>	38
--	----

Kirsi Tirri, Petri Nokelainen and James R. Campbell <i>A cross-cultural study of computer literacy among the academic Olympians</i>	42
--	----

Dalia Cohen and Shoshana Rosemarin <i>Analytical aspects of musical and numerical memory</i>	45
---	----

Dimitrios Stamovlasis and Georgios Tsaparis <i>Some psychometric variables contributing to high ability and performance in science problem solving</i>	50
---	----

István Czigler, János Horváth, László Balázs and Júlia Weisz <i>Non-verbal abstraction and central executive function: High versus average intelligence</i>	54
--	----

Zoltán Kondé and István Czigler <i>Mathematical giftedness and information processing</i>	58
--	----

Afonso Galvao <i>Motivation to learn: The case of professional orchestra players</i>	62
---	----

B. MORALITY, EMOTION, SOCIAL GIFTEDNESS, VALUES

Kirsi Tirri <i>Morality and high ability</i>	69
---	----

Leila Pehkonen, Sinikka Inkeroinen-Huhta and Kirsi Tirri <i>The moral reasoning of gifted adolescents</i>	78
Buket Yakmaci-Güzel <i>A comparison study about overexcitabilities of Turkish 10th graders</i>	82
Michael C. Pyryt <i>Social giftedness: Historical, psychometric and educational perspectives</i>	86
Marion Porath <i>Understanding and fostering social giftedness in early childhood</i>	89
Jane Piirto <i>"I live in my own bubble": The values of talented U.S./Ohio adolescents before and after September 11, 2001</i>	92
Endang W. Riyanto and Franz J. Mönks <i>Social competence of Indonesian gifted adolescents</i>	95

C. NATIONAL PROGRAMMES

Ioannis Paraskevopoulos <i>Education for creativity and giftedness/talent in Greece</i>	101
Lianne Hoogeveen, Janet G. van Hell and Ludo Verhoeven <i>Academic acceleration in Dutch schools</i>	112
Lucie Novotna and Jitka Sejvalová <i>Education of the gifted in the Czech Republic</i>	116
Shlomit Rachmel and Rachel Zorman <i>Enhancing gifted students as path breakers. The Israeli experience</i>	119

D. TEACHERS AND TEACHER TRAINING

Wilma Vialle and Siobhan Quigley <i>"The teachers we want": Exploring the views of gifted students</i>	125
Sofia A. Theodoridou, Costantinos M. Kokkinos and Aggeliki M. Davazoglou <i>Identifying the superior learner: Comparability of student teachers' perceptions of the behavioral characteristics of normal and superior pupils</i>	129
Zipora Oshrat and Tsafirira Shur <i>Training teachers of gifted children</i>	133
Deborah Eyre and Helen Wilson <i>A national training programme for gifted and talented co-ordinators in schools</i>	135

E. PROVISION FOR THE GIFTED IN ORDINARY SCHOOLS

Deborah Eyre <i>Structured tinkering: Improving provision for the gifted in ordinary schools</i>	141
Athanassios Tsiamis <i>An attempt to incorporate enrichment activities into mainstream education</i>	151
Hana Levitte and Dan Wolff <i>Mixed-ability classes as a means to advance gifted students in junior high and high school</i>	155
David Coates <i>Making science more challenging for gifted elementary school children: A school based action research project</i>	159
Karil Lowke <i>An integrated programme for curriculum differentiation</i>	162
Aleksandra Tokarz <i>Procedures for stimulating motivational mechanisms in the development of creative abilities and creative attitudes at school</i>	165
Jean-Luc Patry, Klaus Unterrainer, Günter Wageneder and Sieglinde Weyringer <i>Situation specificity in teaching in enrichment classrooms - A study with the lesson interruption method</i>	168
László Balogh, László Balla, Kálman Nagy and Evá Szombathy <i>Development of high ability pupils aged 10-14</i>	172

F. SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Ronny Erez <i>Meditations on the realization of an educational vision. Israel Arts and Science Academy</i>	177
Bemd Säring <i>Concept formation in open experimental environments: Elements of a science curriculum for gifted high school students</i>	190
Füsün Akarsu <i>INANC experience</i>	193
Muhsin Ogretme <i>The effect of differentiated physics instruction on 9th grade gifted learners</i>	196
Seokhee Cho and Hyunchul Cheong <i>Customized curriculum development for the gifted in special science high schools</i>	200

Kornelia Tischler <i>Specialized high schools - Pros and cons</i>	203
--	-----

G. OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Joan Freeman <i>Out-of-school activities for the gifted and talented around the world</i>	209
--	-----

Netta Maoz and Felix Laub <i>The "Arrow" - A special program in scientific research for gifted high school students</i>	216
--	-----

Christian Fischer and Christiane Ontrup <i>The International Center for the Study of Giftedness - An integrative concept of research, gifted education and teacher training</i>	219
--	-----

Zenita C. Guenther <i>CEDET - Center for talent development, Lavras – Minas Gerais – Brazil</i>	223
--	-----

Helen Wilson <i>Science as a means of challenging young gifted children: Lessons from masterclasses</i>	227
--	-----

Judy Lupart and Elizabeth Cannon <i>SCiBerMENTOR: Connecting young girls and adult mentors in science</i>	230
--	-----

H. UNDERACHIEVERS AND LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Diane Montgomery <i>Able underachievers: Nature, needs and curriculum provision</i>	235
--	-----

Christian Fischer <i>How to cope with learning difficulties of gifted children</i>	248
---	-----

Albert Ziegler, Monika Finsterwald and Robert Grassinger <i>Gender differences in helplessness among mildly gifted and average students within the domain of physics</i>	255
---	-----

Dohee Ahn and Seokhee Cho <i>Factors influencing the learning process of gifted students</i>	259
---	-----

I. APPENDIX

<i>Titles of presentations not included</i>	265
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FOREWORD

The 8th Conference of the European Council for High Ability (ECHA) was originally planned to be held in Jerusalem. However, due to the increasingly dangerous situation in Israel the conference organizers decided to move the venue to the island of Rhodes, Greece.

The conference registered 222 participants, representing institutions from 34 countries. There were three keynote presentations, 8 invited lectures, 4 symposia, 114 individual papers and 27 posters. Interestingly, participants were often encouraged to see that the same practical problems in dealing with the gifted were experienced in many different countries and circumstances. At the same time, it is scientifically important to realize that different cultures always introduce potentially unique influences on human behaviour. Such cross-cultural comparisons set constraints not only on what remains constant but also on what in fact changes. For these reasons, we thought it important that the international diversity of the conference be also reflected in the presentations included in the proceedings.

It is by no means an easy task to make a selection from a large number of papers. As can be seen from the table of contents a rich diversity of topics was discussed during the conference. Conferences are often the testing grounds of new ideas and lines of research just begun. One function of a book of proceedings is to reflect this diversity, to inform the reader of the current state of affairs in theory, research and practice in a given discipline. Our selections, therefore, representing about one third of the total programme, were guided by the goal to be representative of the many topics addressed during the conference. Except for the keynote presentations and for the invited speakers the space for the articles in this book was limited to 3 to 4 pages. The reader will, however, be able to communicate with the authors for more details by using their postal or e-mail address. Contributions which could not be included are listed in the appendix so that interested readers can contact the respective authors.

We thank all authors who made cooperation easy and enjoyable. They submitted their diskettes promptly and responded immediately to any queries.

The conference and these proceedings would not have been possible without the generous assistance of many individuals and organizations. Thanks to ORTRA, Israel, and its gifted personnel for a most efficient and professional conference management and for the design of the cover of this book. Special thanks to Menna Jones at Bildung und Begabung e.V. who did the tedious work of formatting this book and who gave advice on linguistic questions. The Donor's Association for the Promotion of Science and Humanities in Germany (Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft), Essen, and Bildung und Begabung e.V., Bonn, gave generous financial assistance, both for funds to subsidize the participation of financially challenged presenters and for supporting this publication.

Nijmegen and Bonn, July 2003

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SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF INDONESIAN GIFTED ADOLESCENTS

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Gifted adolescents encounter the same developmental issues as all adolescents although these are complicated by the special needs and characteristics of being gifted. Allen & Fox (1979) described the affective problems faced by gifted adolescents, such as environmental, interpersonal and intrapersonal problems. Environmental problems arise in a school milieu where lack of a sufficiently challenging or interesting curriculum leaves the child feeling bored, resentful, hostile or uninvolved. Environmental problems also arise when teachers, students and others accept mediocrity, do not recognize excellence and even denigrate outstanding performance. Interpersonal problems stem from the gifted child being perceived as "different" with the consequence that peers, teachers, and adults may not accept the gifted student's unique qualities. This may cause the student to also reject and deny his/her potential. Finally, parents, teachers, and other adults may have unrealistic expectations regarding performance and behavior. The intrapersonal problems of the gifted are those of self-concept, self-acceptance and self-esteem which may lead to developing appropriate coping strategies or developing dysfunctional behavior responses.

The problems of gifted adolescents in Indonesia are even more difficult, considering that an appropriate educational system for them is not yet available. In fact, the problem is not only with the educational system but also because there is not enough social support from family and peers. Furthermore, Indonesian society, especially in Semarang and Yogyakarta, has a Javanese cultural atmosphere with its conservative values. Koentjaraningrat (1999) suggest that courtesy is strongly oriented towards having community members develop thoughtfulness and intense solidarity. Javanese culture believes that human beings should abide by the prevailing moral standards, capable of inhibition, which creates conflict for gifted adolescents which causes them to withdraw from social encounters.

Social competence of gifted adolescents. The most general definitions of social competence refer to adaptive functioning in which environment and personal resources are used to achieve desirable developmental outcomes within interpersonal contexts. Factors which act as facilitators and inhibitors of developing social competence also affect gifted adolescents. Several decades of research with gifted individuals have barely scratched the surface as far as psychological and social development are concerned. Educators and parents have become more aware of the need to nurture the social and emotional development of gifted adolescents in addition to meeting their intellectual needs. Generally, peer groups are central to adolescents' experience and provide the adolescents with a basis for evaluation of who he/she is and how well he/she is doing. Adolescents do pressure each other to conform (Sheifert & Hoffnung, 1991). Webb *et al.* (1982) indicated that adolescence is the period for establishing close friendships. This is also true for gifted adolescents. The availability of possible friends and intellectual peers is often a problem for gifted adolescents.

In most studies, moderately gifted adolescents have more favorable overall ratings of behavior problems and social relationships as compared with their age-mates. On the other hand, the findings regarding favorable personal and social competence show that moderately gifted are better than the highly gifted.

Methodology. *Subjects.* 231 senior high school students in Semarang and Yogyakarta participated in this study, with 77 students in each of the non-gifted, moderately, and highly gifted groups. Their age ranged 15-19 year, mean =17.46, median=17.2, SD=1.61).

Instruments. The Social Competence Questionnaire (SCQ) was administered which includes 64-items. Each item is scored on a four-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". It measures the following components:

- (a) *Internal or cognitive resources* (32 items)
Internal or cognitive capacities, serves as resources or underlying bases for social competence that assist adolescents in establishing and maintaining positive interpersonal relationships. Such capacities include positive self-esteem, internal locus of control, and social perspective taking.
- (b) *A balance between sociability and individuality* (16 items)
A second major component of social competence is the paradoxical but necessary balance between sociability (or togetherness) and individuality (or autonomy).
- (c) *Social skills regarding peers* (16 items)
The social skills of adolescents regarding peers, refers to the application of previously specified interpersonal resources in a successful manner with age-mates. Such an approach focuses on the behavioral repertoires that adolescents acquire for adaptation and acceptance beyond family boundaries in reference to peers.

Procedure. The researcher was assisted by six psychology students. It was necessary to return to the schools several times to test absentee students. Respondents completed the SCQ after their regular class time. The time taken for completing the SCQ was between 25-40 minutes.

Results and discussion. A oneway ANOVA performed on the Social Competence scores revealed a significant difference between the three groups ($F=18.57$, $p<.001$) and also a significant difference between groups-sexes ($F=3.93$, $p<.05$). Tukey's multiple range test revealed that all means were significantly different from each other ($p <.01$). A Tukey's multiple comparison of the Social Competence scores of male and female non-gifted, moderate and highly gifted students revealed the following significant differences. First, the HG-males scored significantly lower in social competence than any of the other groups. Second, both female and male moderately gifted scored significantly higher in social competence than all of the other groups, except NG males. The nongifted males and females and highly gifted females scored intermediately on social competence.

The hypothesis that there are differences of the three group's social competences received support from the present results, with the moderately gifted group scoring highest on social competence. Highly gifted students may develop one aspect of their personality very quickly and more slowly in some others. Over the course of development, highly gifted adolescents may experience substantial stress when their emotional development falls behind their intellectual development. Sheras (1997) describes how the gifted may have high levels of creativity and motivation, which is related to their interest in novelty, and

their dislike of monotony or things which are traditional and conventional. This can lead them to be perceived as peculiar by their peers. As a result, gifted adolescents can become unsure of themselves, which over time can cause them to feel that something is wrong with them.

The social and cultural environment has a great influence on a person's competence; community members will reinforce expected behaviors and punish those considered improper (Sheifert & Hoffnung, 1991). This inflicts a greater burden on highly gifted adolescents, as the Javanese community emphasizes obedience, and spontaneous, abrupt self-expression is considered unethical. Koentjaraningrat (1999) suggests that courtesy is very much collaterally oriented in which community members have to develop thoughtfulness and solidarity. Javanese culture believes that human beings should abide by the moral mores, capable of inhibition, which creates conflicts for gifted adolescents.

Another possibility may arise in Javanese households and community, which holds different views and expectations for girls and boys. The discrimination also occurs regarding educational opportunities in which boys are given first priority for higher education. It is assumed that boys will be heads of the family, so that they have to work, acquire high social status, while girls will be housewives, responsible for parenting and household chores (Koentjaraningrat, 1999). Such a view results in high demands (with high standard of achievement) of the community towards highly gifted boys, even though the high standard often results in peer rejection. This creates conflicts between peer acceptance and achievement, particularly in gifted males. De Jong (1979) suggests that what happens in Javanese households is also found in the wider society in which greater opportunities and facilities are prioritized for boys rather than for girls. In fact, parental and social expectations and demands are seen as both a responsibility and burden causing the gifted to be anxious of failure. The demands drive them to become superior, unrivaled by their peers: in other words, they are not well trained in their social competence. In contrast, highly gifted females do not encounter such strong demands to be high achievers. As a result, they are relatively burden-free and are more capable of being adaptive and socially competent.

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High Ability Studies

High Ability Studies provides a forum for scholars in a variety of disciplines associated with the development of human ability, whether through the communication of ideas, scientific research or the exchange of practical experience. The journal reflects concerns and recent developments in this area during the school years as well as across the whole life span. Far from being restricted to the traditional focus on high-level cognitive development, it also presents investigations into other areas of human endeavour, such as sport, technology, the arts, business and social relations. The journal is not only concerned with the educational instruction of the highly able, but also with aspects of their personality, such as motivation, self-esteem, a feeling of responsibility and persistence. The journal presents material which discusses appropriate supportive action for the highly able and beyond that for those who work in their interests, such as parents, teachers, counsellors and mentors. Furthermore, the contents are not restricted to the study of manifest high level achievement, but include the identification and nurturance of unexercised potential. For children, teachers and school provision are important in this process, as are other influential areas of the educational environment, such as family, peers and the wider society. High Ability Studies is a refereed journal which publishes papers in English on theory, empirical research and practice, as well as reviews of books, target articles along with peer commentaries and high quality special issues devoted to current topics. It is international, offering viewpoints from many cultures around the world, and it is the official journal of ECHA. The journal is indexed by ISI.

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