TheGiftedChild'sRighttoEducation

ByLearningCurve|Oct15,2014

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normalprobability,giftedchildrenwouldcompriseapproximately3%ofthepopulation,translatingtoabouthalf them.Childrenfrom1%ofthepopulationwillbeverygifted;about1%willbeverytalentedander剩余的96%willbegiftedbutnotsuperior.Anyonecanbenefitfromtherighttoeducationaswillnothurtthegiftedchildrenofthepoormost.

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Theconceptofgiftednessisthegreatdebatedamongresearchersinthefieldofgiftededucation.Whilethereisnouniversal definitionofgiftedness,thereareseveraldefinitionsproposedbyFrancoysGagne,JosephStemberg,andHowardGardner. OnetothepopularmodelsofgiftednessisRenzulli'sThree-RingModel,whichincludes:

a)Well-aboveaverageability:Ability(intelligence)needs to be aboveaverage, but, need not be exceptional. Ability is conceptualisedintermsofstandarddeviationsinIQscores.

b)Creativity:is the ability to associatethlikey delleas,thinkanalyticallyanddivergentlyandproposenew solutionsthat areappropriate.Creativityiscrucialtoachievementinanyfield:achievementmeansbeyondmemorizationustothe acquiredknowledge tod evelopanewproductoridea.

c)TaskCommitment:is the ability to workhard to acquire knowledgeandskillsin aparticulardomainofinterest.Renzulli
While there is no one definition of giftedness, researchers agree on common characteristics of gifted children:

1. rapid learner
2. interest in novel, complex, and challenging problems
3. high language ability and advanced vocabulary; an avid reader
4. high energy; may be restless; may be bored by routine tasks
5. curiosity: asks unusual questions ('Why' and 'What If') and performs independent explorations
6. metacognitive skills/associative thinking: identifies connections between ideas from different areas; e.g., when learning a concept in class, associates it with a phenomenon s/he has observed in real-life
7. creativity: generates new formulae to solve math, offer unusual responses to a question
8. persistence and motivation to excel in an area of interest. (Marks/competition, may not motivate gifted children.)
9. ability to grasp advanced concepts
10. hypothetical thinking, philosophical, and ethical concerns.

A gifted child may show only some of these characteristics. The National Association For Gifted Children (NAGC, U.S.) recognises giftedness in broad areas: academic, general or specific intellectual ability, creativity, leadership, visual/performing arts or music, and psychomotor abilities.

Unfortunately, the curriculum and practice of the typical Indian classroom is geared towards the average learner through lecture-based teaching and written exam-based assessment encouraging memorization. Within such a system, the possibility of recognizing gifted children is limited. Very often, teachers mistake the high achievers in tests as gifted.

Research in the field of giftedness reveals that there is a large proportion of children who may be gifted cope poorly with a structured classroom, dislike writing, perform poorly in exams, ask unusual questions, or propose unusual ways to solve problems thereby disturbing the regular classroom. Teachers often recognize these children as trouble makers. Even in cases when a gifted child is recognized (not as a gifted child, but one who is a fast learner), the teacher generally leaves that child to his/her own devices or asks him/her to help a weaker student.

Contrary to the belief that gifted children can 'manage on their own', research suggests that like all children, gifted children need appropriate stimulation, challenge and support to fulfill their potential. Unless the school curriculum meets gifted children's advanced educational needs, they may display the following problems:

a. **Behavioral problems in class**: Boredom, restlessness, disciplinary issues, frequently skipping school.

b. **Poor socio-emotional adjustment**: Gifted children may feel left out, hide their abilities to fit in with their peers, bullied, or may wonder 'what's wrong with me?' and aloof.

c. **Poor work habits**: unless gifted children are adequately challenged in school from a young age, they may develop poor work habits. For many gifted children, secondary school or college is the first time they face a challenging curriculum or peers of equal ability. When this happens, they may conclude that they were wrong about their intelligence ('I thought I was smart, but I can't cope with this curriculum so, I will never be able to do this, so there's no point trying'), and may never fulfill their potential.

These problems are not inherent to gifted children; rather, they arise when a child has advanced cognitive needs which the regular classroom does not satisfy.

**Conclusion**

In the absence of a national programme of gifted education, India loses an opportunity to tap the talent of these young minds that can contribute to the growth and development of the nation. The country has recognized this and has initiated a national programme in 2010 to develop tools for identification of the gifted children in Science and Mathematics (3-15 years). The programme was initiated by the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor to Government of India: NIAS anchors the programme with two other collaborators- Delhi University and Agastya Foundation. Multiple tools using quantitative and qualitative methods are developed and have been validated. While the research groups work on further validation of the identification methods, efforts are made for mentoring the gifted children.

The task is enormous and more groups need to join this national effort. There are local efforts promoted by Jagdish Bose National Talent Search, Kolkata; Jyana Probhodini in Pune; research in gifted education led by Prof. Krishna Maitra of Delhi University among many others. However there is a need to, expand to create more groups in other parts of the country such that there is a national movement of gifted education.

**References**


Anitha (Ph.D., Education) is a professor, School of Social Sciences at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bangalore, India. She currently anchors the Education Programme and the National Programme of Gifted Education at NIAS. Her research interests are broadly in the area of education and gender. She may be contacted at bkanitha@gmail.com.

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