

4 Typology of Giftedness

The specification of the types of giftedness can pose a problem because gifted children are not a homogenous group as was said before. People usually imagine a gifted child as the highly able child or a hardly working pupil who assiduously completes work and very often is known as the class “swot” or “brain box”. In reality the picture of gifted children is more complex. Except the gifted achievers, are those who (despite their gifts and talents) persistently underachieve due to boredom, lack of interest or enormous perfectionism. Similarly, they are threatened other groups of children - young people who are cognitively advanced enough to play games with complex rule structures and yet not socially mature enough to deal with the frustration that occurs when their peers cannot grasp their game; or children whose giftedness may be masked by the fact that they are not being educated in their first language or also who have a disability.

There is interesting identification methodology which can help teachers, educators and parents to educate gifted children. Betts and Neihart (1988) developed six profiles of gifted and talented individuals which explain how each kind of gifted and talented child manifests itself in the traditional teaching environment. Based on research, in 2010 Betts and Neihart (2010) made a revision of their first typology and presented a modified version of the typology - the revised profiles of the gifted and talented. This typology is based on many years of empirical research and belongs to highly regarded ones. The knowledge about the learning styles and characteristics of academically gifted students may help teachers to understand, more fully, some of the causes of underachievement in these groups. The following presentation can provide information about the behaviour; feelings; needs; identification; adult and peer perceptions; home support and school support. It is important to remember that this is a theoretical concept that can provide insights for facilitating the development of the gifted and talented, not diagnostic classification model.

The various profiles will now be examined individually in order to enrich understanding of the needs of gifted and talented children and to highlight and justify the strategies that could be used during teaching/learning process (Betts and Neihart, 2010).

In following text, the typology of the revised profiles of the gifted and talented (Betts and Neihart, 2010) is presented primarily in points, because this form more corresponds to the purpose of this publication.

Type 1 The Successful

According to Betts and Neihart (1988, p. 248), the vast majority of the gifted fall into this category. The NCCA Guidelines (2007) state that “Exceptionally able young adults who may underachieve in college and later in adulthood come from this group” (p.42). National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. 2007. *Draft Guidelines for Exceptionally Able Students*. Dublin: DES.

- *They are successful at school.*
- *They want to appeal to teachers and get good grades.*

- *They are conformist and dependent.*
- *They tend to choose safe activities and avoid possible risk.*
- *They are mostly loved by their parents and teachers and admired by their peers.*

Common Support

- *Supply them with more complex problems to solve.*
- *Accelerate the learning process.*
- *Encourage the development of the giftedness.*
- *Encourage systematically the willingness to take risks and to become more independent.*

Feeling and attitudes

- *Complacent*
- *Dependent*
- *Good academic self-concept*
- *Fear of failure*
- *Extrinsic motivation*
- *Self-critical*
- *Works for the grade*
- *Unsure about the future*
- *Eager for approval*
- *Entity view of intelligence*

Behaviours

- *Achieves*
- *Seeks teacher approval*
- *Avoids risks*
- *Doesn't go beyond the syllabus*
- *Accepts and conforms*
- *Chooses safe activities*
- *Gets good grades*
- *Becomes a consumer of knowledge*

Needs

- *To be challenged*
- *To see deficiencies*
- *To take risks*

- *Assertiveness skills*
- *Creativity development*
- *Incremental view of intelligence*
- *Self-knowledge*
- *Independent learning skills*

Identification

- *Use many multiple criteria*
- *Grades*
- *Standardised test scores*
- *Individual IQ tests*
- *Teacher nominations*
- *Parent nominations*
- *Peer nominations*

Adult and peer perceptions

- *Liked by teachers*
- *Admired by peers*
- *Generally liked and accepted by parents*
- *Overestimate their abilities*
- *Believe they will succeed on their own*

Home support

- *Parents need to let go*
- *Independence*
- *Freedom to make choices*
- *Risk-taking experiences*
- *Allow child to be distressed*
- *Affirm child's ability to cope with challenges*

School support

- *Subject and grade acceleration*
- *Needs more than AP, IB and Honours*
- *Time for personal curriculum*
- *Activities that push out of comfort zone*
- *Development of independent learning skills*
- *In-depth studies*

- *Mentorships*
- *Cognitive coaching*
- *Time with intellectual peers*

Type 2 The Creative

This type is divergently gifted individuals and was described as the “challenger” in before typology. The child belongs to this type is usually creative but can be rebellious and challenging if their creativity is not recognised. Many school systems fail to identify this type.

Characteristic:

- *They have a strong intrinsic motivation.*
- *They are androgynous.*
- *They have reduced self-control.*
- *They are emotionally unstable.*
- *They are full of energy.*
- *They might be less motivated to meet the expectations of others.*
- *They may have disagreements with their peers.*

It is important to ask in what areas they are creative, not how creative they are!

Common Support:

- *Reward fresh thinking.*
- *Reward them for overcoming obstacles and prod them into performing difficult tasks.*
- *Provide mentoring.*
- *Arrange education (and a teacher) in the field of giftedness.*
- *Tolerate personality traits significantly different from the average (in the adulthood there is a higher risk of mental disorders compared to the average population. The risk increases especially in case of an artistic and literary talent).*

Feeling and attitudes:

- *Highly creative*
- *Bored and frustrated*
- *Fluctuating self-esteem*
- *Impatient and defensive*
- *Heightened sensitivity*
- *Uncertain about social roles*

- *More psychologically vulnerable*
- *Strong motivation to follow inner convictions*
- *Wants to right wrongs*
- *High tolerance for ambiguity*
- *High energy*

Behaviours:

- *Expresses impulses*
- *Challenges teacher*
- *Questions rules and policies*
- *Is honest and direct*
- *Emotionally liable*
- *May have poor self-control*
- *Creative expression*
- *Perseveres in area of interest (passions)*
- *Stands up for convictions*
- *May conflict with peers*

Needs:

- *To relate to others*
- *To learn tact, flexibility, self-awareness, and self-control*
- *Support for creativity*
- *Contractual systems*
- *Less pressure to confirm*
- *Interpersonal skills to affirm others*
- *Strategies to cope with potential psychological vulnerabilities*

Identification:

- *Ask: In what ways is this child creative?*
- *Use domain specific, objective measures*
- *Focus on creative potential rather than achievement*

Adult and peer perceptions:

- *Not liked by teachers*
- *Viewed as rebellious*
- *Engaged in power struggle*

- *Creative*
- *Discipline problems*
- *Peers see them as entertaining*
- *Want to change them*
- *Don't view them as gifted*
- *Underestimate their success*
- *Want them to conform*

Home support:

- *Respect for their goals*
- *Tolerate higher levels of deviance*
- *Allow them to pursue interests (passions)*
- *Model appropriate behaviour*
- *Family projects*
- *Communicate confidence in their abilities*
- *Affirm their strengths*
- *Recognise psychological vulnerability and intervene when necessary*

School support:

- *Tolerance*
- *Reward new thinking*
- *Placement with appropriate teachers*
- *Direct and clear communication*
- *Give permission for feelings*
- *Domain specific training*
- *Allow nonconformity*
- *Mentorships*
- *Direct instruction in interpersonal skills*
- *Coach for deliberate practice*

Type 3 The Underground

Betts and Neihart claim that recently there have been changes in the understanding of this type of giftedness. Generally, these are middle school girls although boys may also want to hide their giftedness. "Underground" girl often feels anxious and insecure because of a conflict between social and academic success. A typical underground girl begins to deny their giftedness in the late primary and early post primary stage when the need to belong and feel

included takes precedence. If a gifted boy goes underground, it tends to happen later, in high school, and typically in response to the pressure to participate in athletics.

Characteristic:

- *They deny their talent in order to fit in.*
- *They may feel others “force” them to abandon their ambitions.*
- *They may feel other people disagree with their objectives.*
- *When they succeed, they perceive it as a betrayal of their group.*
- *They cease developing their talent and they are not interested in using it.*

Common support:

- *Create helpful environment for education.*
- *Help them cope with their internal contradictions.*
- *Teach them social skills so they can succeed in a variety of situations in the society in which they live.*
- *Discuss openly what success costs. (It is immensely important to discuss a wide range of topics – e.g. gender issues. It is also advisable to watch movies together and talk about them...)*

Feeling and attitudes:

- *Desire to belong socially*
- *Feel unsure and pressured*
- *Conflicted, guilty and insecure*
- *Unsure of their right to their emotions*
- *Diminished sense of self*
- *Ambivalent about achievement*
- *Internalise and personalise societal ambiguities and conflicts*
- *View some achievement behaviours as betrayal of their social group*

Behaviours:

- *Devalue, discount or deny talent*
- *Drops out of GT and advanced classes*
- *Rejects challenges*
- *Moves from one peer group to the next*
- *Not connected to the teacher or the class*
- *Unsure of direction*

Needs:

- *Freedom to make choices*
- *Conflicts to be made explicit*
- *Learn to code switch*
- *Gifted peer group network*
- *Support for abilities*
- *Role models who cross cultures*
- *Self-understanding and acceptance*
- *An audience to listen to what they have to say (to be heard)*

Identification:

- *Interviews*
- *Parent nominations*
- *Teacher nominations*
- *Be cautious with peer nominations*
- *Demonstrated performance*
- *Measures of creative potential*
- *Nonverbal measure of intelligence*

Adult and peer perceptions:

- Viewed as leaders or unrecognised
- Seen as average and successful
- Perceived to be compliant
- Seen as quiet/shy
- Seen as unwilling to risk
- Viewed as resistant

Home support:

- Cultural brokering
- Normalise their dissonance
- College and career planning
- Provide gifted role models
- Model lifelong learning
- Give freedom to make choices
- Normalise the experience
- Don't compare with siblings

- Provide cultural brokering
- Built multicultural appreciation

School support:

- Frame the concepts as societal phenomena
- Welcoming learning environments
- Provide role models
- Help develop support groups
- Open discussions about class, racism, sexism
- Cultural brokering
- Direct instruction of social skills
- Teach the hidden curriculum
- Provide college planning
- Discuss costs of success

Type 4 The At-Risk

This kind of giftedness, which was first described in 1989, is substantially influenced by friends and family. It was called the “dropout” in before typology. This child has a long history of underachievement, possibly because of inappropriate teaching programs, and needs a lot of support to reach her/his potential. The NCCA Guidelines claim that dropouts feel angry towards “adults and with themselves because the system has not met their needs for many years and they feel rejected” (NCCA Guidelines, 2007, p.48).

Characteristic:

- *There are two main subgroups.*
- *While majority of such students tend to have pro-social behavior, there is also minority with criminal tendencies.*
- *It might be very difficult to help to such antisocial type - especially when the help comes too late!*
- *They tend to be disruptive. They also create crisis situations.*
- *They may struggle with serious mental problems.*
- *They have behaviour problems.*
- *They are not motivated by the reward and feedback that teachers provide them.*
- *They are resentful, angry and irresponsible.*
- *They entertain unrealistic expectations from themselves.*

- *They seek exciting entertainment.*
- *They cannot cope with everyday failure.*

Common Support:

- *Provide support and rules (these are necessary!).*
- *Provide professional help - individual, group or family counselling is absolutely essential.*
- *Feel empathy.*
- *Offer confrontation and responsibility.*
- *Don't make concessions on the standard you set earlier. This could be interpreted as a loss of confidence in their abilities!*
- *Don't underestimate the importance of their relationship with mentors.*

Feeling and attitudes:

- *Resentful and angry*
- *Depressed*
- *Reckless and manipulative*
- *Poor self-concept*
- *Defensive*
- *Unrealistic expectations*
- *Unaccepted*
- *Resistive to authority*
- *Not motivated for teacher driven rewards*
- *A subgroup is antisocial*

Behaviours:

- *Creates crises and causes disruptions*
- *Thrill seeking*
- *Will work for the relationship*
- *Intermittent attendance*
- *Pursues outside interests*
- *Low academic achievement*
- *May be self-isolating*
- *Often creative*
- *Criticises self and others*
- *Produces inconsistent work*

Needs:

- *Safety and structure*
- *An “alternative” environment*
- *An individualised program*
- *Confrontation and accountability*
- *Alternatives*
- *Professional counselling*
- *Direction and short-term goals*

Identification:

- *Individual IQ testing*
- *Achievement subtests*
- *Interviews*
- *Auditions*
- *Nonverbal measures of intelligence*
- *Parent nominations*
- *Teacher nominations*

Adult and peer perceptions:

- *Adults may be angry with them*
- *Peers are judgemental*
- *Seen as troubled or irresponsible*
- *Seen as rebellious*
- *May be afraid of them*
- *May be afraid for them*
- *Adults feel powerless to help them*

Home support:

- *Seek counselling for family*
- *Avoid power struggles*
- *Involvement in extracurricular activities*
- *Assess for dangerous behaviour*
- *Keep dialogue open*
- *Hold accountable*
- *Minimise punishment*
- *Communicate confidence in ability to overcome obstacles*

- *Preserve relationships*

School support:

- *Don't lower expectations*
- *Diagnostic testing*
- *Non-traditional study skills*
- *In-depth studies and mentorships*
- *G.E.D.*
- *Academic coaching*
- *Home visits*

Type 5 Twice/Multi Exceptional

This type is called “double labelled” as well. Betts and Neihart highlight this group of children who are exceptionally able, but may have a physical, emotional or learning difficulty which can cause their exceptional ability to remain unidentified. Often the impairment is recognised but the giftedness is not. These children can feel emotions of powerlessness and may have low self-esteem. The vast majority of gifted programs do not identify these children, nor do they offer differentiated programming that addresses and integrates their special needs.

Characteristic:

- *They are often unsuccessful at school.*
- *They have social and emotional problems.*
- *They have behavioral problems.*
- *They are prone to anxiety and depression.*
- *They have low self-confidence (e.g. at school).*
- *They are not satisfied at school. They seem bored and annoyed.*
- *They are immature in comparison with other types of gifted students.*
- *It is essential to support and develop social and emotional competences of these students.*
- *From the intellectual point of view they are always ahead of their peers.*
- *However, they tend to be socially and emotionally immature and seem usually about 3 or 4 years "younger" than their peers.*

Common Support:

- *Use different criteria when measuring their success.*
- *Find out how they act and work in their classes.*
- *Ensure they are evaluated within their curriculum.*

- *Ask THEM.*
- *Emphasize their talent and show consideration for their disability.*
- *Supply them with sufficiently difficult tasks in the main area of their interest.*

Feeling and attitudes:

- *Learned helplessness*
- *Intense frustration and anger*
- *Mood disorders*
- *Prone to discouragement*
- *Work to hang on*
- *Poor academic self-support*
- *Don't see themselves as successful*
- *Poor academic self-concept*
- *Don't know where to belong*

Behaviours:

- *Makes connections easily*
- *Demonstrates inconsistent work*
- *Seems average or below*
- *More similar to younger students in some aspects of social/emotional functioning*
- *May be disruptive or off-task*
- *Are good problem solvers*
- *Behaviour problems*
- *Thinks conceptually*
- *Enjoys novelty and complexity*
- *Is disorganised*
- *Slow in information processing*
- *May not be able to cope with gifted peer group*

Needs:

- *Emphasis on strengths*
- *Coping strategies*
- *Monitoring for additional disorders – especially ADHA*
- *To learn to persevere*
- *Environment that develops strengths*
- *To learn to self-advocate*

Identification:

- *Measure of current classroom functioning*
- *Achievement test scores*
- *Curriculum based assessment*
- *Examine performance over time*
- *Look for pattern of declining performance paired with evidence of superior ability*
- *Do not rely on IQ scatter analysis or test discrepancy analysis*

Adult and peer perceptions:

- *Requires too many modifications because of accommodation*
- *Seen as “weird”*
- *Underestimated for their potential*
- *Viewed as helpless*
- *Seen as not belonging in GT*
- *Perceived as requiring a great deal of structure*
- *Seen only for disability*

Home support:

- *Focus on strengths while accommodating disability*
- *Develop will to succeed*
- *Recognise and affirm gifted abilities*
- *Challenge in strength areas*
- *Provide risk-taking opportunities*
- *Assume college is a possibility*
- *Family involvement*
- *Nurture self-control*
- *Teach how to set and reach realistic goals*

School support:

- *Challenge in area of strength is first priority*
- *Acceleration in area of strengths*
- *Accommodation for disability*
- *Ask: What will it take for this child to succeed here?”*
- *Direct instruction in self-regulation strategies*
- *Give time to be with GT peers*
- *Teach self-advocacy*

- *Teach SMART goal setting*

Type 6 Autonomous Learner

Betts and Neihart describe this type of learner as being independent and self-directed. Few gifted children demonstrate this style at a very early age although parents may see evidence of the style at home. Appropriate educational programmes can encourage children in this direction. This type is actually the ideal which should be achieved in all gifted children. Teachers should think and plan their activities towards learners' independency.

Characteristic:

- *They are persistent and are able to set goals themselves.*
- *They search for challenges.*
- *They are powerful and efficient.*
- *They are courageous.*
- *They have good self-control.*
- *They may (but do not have to) consider academic education as one of its priorities.*
- *They are able to get over disappointment and failure.*

Common Support:

- *Support them more. They need it no matter how successful they are.*
- *Help them address social and psychological difficulties associated with their success.*
- *Teach them how to manage themselves.*
- *Set up a supportive team.*
- *Find a mentor.*

Feeling and attitudes:

- *Self-confident*
- *Self-accepting*
- *Hold incremental view of ability*
- *Optimistic*
- *Intrinsically motivated*
- *Ambitious and excited*
- *May not view academics as one of their highest priorities*
- *Willing to fail and learn from it*
- *Shows tolerance and respect for others*

Behaviours:

- *Appropriate social skills*
- *Works independently*
- *Set SMART goals*
- *Seek challenge*
- *Strongly self-directed*
- *Follows strong areas of passion*
- *Good self-regulators*
- *Stands up for convictions*
- *Resilient*
- *A producer of knowledge*
- *Possesses understanding and acceptance of self*

Needs:

- *More support, not less*
- *Advocacy for new directions and increasing independence*
- *Feedback about strengths and possibilities*
- *Facilitation of continuing growth*
- *Support for risk-taking*
- *On-going, facilitative relationships*
- *Become more adept at managing themselves*
- *A support team*

Identification:

- *Demonstrated performance*
- *Products*
- *Nominations*
- *Portfolios*
- *Interviews*
- *Standardised test scores*
- *Awards*

Adult and peer perceptions:

- *Admired and accepted*
- *Seen as capable and responsible by parents*
- *Positive influences*

- *Successful in diverse environments*
- *Psychologically healthy*
- *Positive peer relationships*

Home support:

- *Advocate for child at school and in the community*
- *Provide opportunities related to passion areas*
- *Allow friends of all ages*
- *Remove time and space restrictions for learning*
- *Help them build a support team*
- *Include in parents' passions*
- *Include in family decision making*
- *Listen*
- *Stay out of their way*

School support:

- *Allow development of long-term, integrated plan of study*
- *Remove time and space restrictions*
- *Develop multiple, related in-depth studies, including mentorships*
- *Wide variety of accelerated options*
- *Mentors and cultural brokers*
- *Waive traditional school policies and regulations*
- *Stay out of their way*
- *Help them cope with psychological costs of success*

These profiles of gifted and talented children are useful in so far as they help teachers to get an insight into the mind of the more able children with whom they are working. It is very interesting that the presence of these types of gifted and talented children is different in countries all over the world. A child that is considered gifted in Europe would not be judged the same way in Asia. In Asia there are many autonomous gifted students (type 6) but successful gifted students (type 1) occur there rarely.

References

- BETTS, George T., NEIHART, Maureen. Profiles of the gifted and talented. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 32(2), 1988. ISBN 0 642 77487 0. p. 248–253.

