

COUNSELLING
— AND —
CONTEMPORARY
— SOCIAL ISSUES IN —
MULTICULTURAL SETTINGS

A BOOK IN HONOUR OF
PROFESSOR S. O. SALAMI

Edited by:

D. A. Adeyemo, Ph.D

D. A. Oluwole, Ph.D

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**Department of Guidance and Counselling,
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**Counselling and Contemporary Social Issues in
Multicultural Settings: A Book in Honour of
Professor S.O. Salami**

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CHAPTER 6

IDENTIFICATION AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF GIFTEDNESS IN THE CLASSROOM: THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

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Abstract

This paper reviewed the strategies teachers could use in identifying, instructing and managing giftedness of students in the classroom. In the paper, the meaning and concept of giftedness was looked into after which the authors discussed the characteristics common to gifted children. The three broad characteristics examined are physical characteristics, Educational/Intellectual Characteristics, Social and Emotional Characteristics. The formal and informal ways of identifying gifted children were examined. The paper further discussed the role a teacher can play in managing giftedness in the Nigerian educational setting. Finally, conclusion was drawn and recommendations made. It was recommended that teachers should be flexible, open, have strong communication skills as well as positive sense of self.

Keywords: *Identification, Instructional Strategies, Management, Giftedness, Classroom.*

Introduction

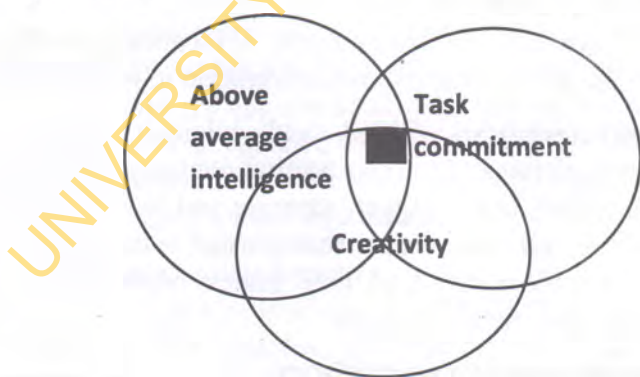
Identifying the gifted and the talented implies recognizing children with gifted behavioural traits and sorting them out using appropriate screening devices. Early identification is beneficial since traits of giftedness are noticeable early in life, and children thus identified early have ample opportunities to develop their potentials to the fullest. A multi-disciplinary approach is considered more valid and acceptable than identification through a single procedure. A number of identifiers required to carry out specific functions in the identification process can either be informal or formal in nature. Later in this paper, effort was made to discuss extensively how gifted children can be identified formally and informally.

Prior to extensive discussion on identification process, it is pertinent to point out who a gifted child is. Definitions of giftedness abound in the literature. Nwazuo (2003) has pointed out that one defining criterion of giftedness is superior performance or superior ability. According to him, within the framework of superiority, the term does not appear to have any absolute meaning given the fact that expressions such as high intelligence, talentedness, creative potential, talent field, superior ability, outstanding performances and soon have been used to describe giftedness. Giftedness is expressed particularly by way of mental achievement, ingenuity, creativity, visible expressions of feelings, public performance and motor skills. It therefore concerns a variety of talents which makes the definition of giftedness virtually impossible.

Some gifted children are enthusiastic and keen learners while others have little interest and motivation. Some achieve excellently because they have keen minds and are able to acquire factual knowledge rapidly while others excel in the application of acquired knowledge. Giftedness relates fully to the total personality structure requiring perfect equilibrium to attain the full potential. Giftedness points to a particular talent with which a person has been endowed in respect of either his intellectual abilities or other personal qualities and which clearly distinguishes him from his fellow man.

Intelligence, creativity and talent have been central to the various definition of giftedness that have been proposed over the years. Lewis (2010), one of the pioneers in the field, defined the gifted as those who score in the top 2% on standardized tests of intelligence. Guilford (2009) believed creativity was the key to the solutions and innovations by most gifted scientists and inventors. Witty (1958) recognizing the value of including special skills and talents, described gifted and talented children as those “whose performance is consistently remarkable in any potentially valuable area”. These three concepts continue to be reflected in the current and still-evolving definitions of gifted and talented children.

Renzulli, Reis and Smith (1981) defined giftedness as an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits namely: above average intelligence, task commitment and creativity. The shaded portion of the three rings shows the interaction among the three clusters. It must be pointed out that no single cluster makes giftedness. Rather, it is the interaction among the three clusters that research has shown to be the necessary ingredient for creative and productive accomplishment.



It is important to point out that each cluster above is an equal partner in contributing to giftedness. No one is superior to the other. The definition given by Renzulli, Reis and Smith (1981) is one of the most widely acceptable definitions of giftedness today.

Another generally acceptable definition of giftedness is the one given by Sidney Marland (1972) as he quoted from the so-called

United States Office of Education's definition, also known as the Federal State definition, which reads as follows:

Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programmes and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school programme in order to realize their contribution to self and society. Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas singly or in combination: General intellectual ability, Specific academic aptitude, Creative or Productive thinking, Leadership ability, Visual and Performing arts and Psychomotor ability.

Characteristics of Gifted Children

Uyanwa (2006) worked on the Physical, Educational/Intellectual and Social and Emotional characteristics common to gifted children.

Physical Characteristics:- Gifted and talented persons are generally superior physically to their normal counterparts. They are generally more robust, taller, bigger, stronger and heavier. At birth, they weigh heavier and sleep deeper than normal babies. They learn to sit, crawl and walk earlier than their mates. Mentally, they are healthy and suffer less sensory defects.

Educational/Intellectual Characteristics

Uyanwa went further to indicate that most gifted and talented children of school age are superior to average (non-gifted) children. Most of the intellectually gifted children learn to read before age of three years, some teach themselves to read. They are accelerated from one class to another. They graduate younger, participate more in extra-curricular activities than their normal peers. They do very

well in all school subjects both in academic and in non-academic areas to the extent that they are described as all rounders. Educationally, they are more interested in sciences and in abstract subjects as in literature, debate and history. They score highly in standardized intelligence tests.

At early life, gifted and talented children show indications of superior intelligence as demonstrated in quick understanding, insatiable curiosity, extensive detailed information, retentive memory, large vocabulary, unusual interest in number relations in atlases and encyclopedias. They show exceptional interest in reading and like reading adult/advanced books.

Social and Emotional Characteristics

Socially, gifted and talented persons tend to be happy and are admired by their peers (Uyanwa, 2006). The gifted feel happy within themselves especially when they are challenged academically to use their abilities to the fullest. They have wide and varied interests and are positive in their approach to life. They are very honest, trustworthy, sincere, obedient and humble. They hardly cheat and like to serve or help others. As a group they enjoy stable emotion, and are psychologically balanced and better adjusted in adulthood. These personality qualities make them good social leaders and they are always committed to their groups.

If the gifted students are not identified, special arrangement cannot be made for them to enhance their giftedness and if their giftedness is not enhanced there is no way they can contribute to economic and technological development of a nation.

How to Identify Gifted Learners

In the earliest century, teacher's judgement was the only means of identifying gifted children (Torrance, 1966). Later, teacher's judgement was virtually replaced by standardized test of mental ability (Intelligence tests). This is because giftedness was seen mainly in terms of high intellectual performance. Currently however, the use of a multi-dimensional approach in identifying gifted children has been considered more acceptable than a single procedure (Adetoye, 2014; Ishola, 2016). Thus, gifted children can now be identified formally and informally.

Formal Identification

A gifted child can be identified formally through the use of Achievement test, Intelligence test and Class records.

Use of Achievement Test

Standardized achievement tests are used to obtain information on the achievement level of students in academic setting. Children who perform very well at levels above their age grade can be selected for further assessment. Some of such tests include, Metropolitan Achievement Tests (MAT), California Achievement Test (CAT) and Stanford Achievement Test. These tests are foreign tests and may not give a true assessment of Nigerian gifted children. The test items are based on foreign environment and experiences. The major problem with these tests is that the norms are not based on Nigerian backgrounds. In other words, to enable a person react positively to a test, it must be related to his or her culture. Here in Nigeria, types of achievement tests include: National Common Entrance Examination, West African School Certificate Examination and Joint Admission and Matriculation Examinations (Oladele, 2016). These tests are used to measure the outcome of learning as well as the quality of progress students have made in their school work. Achievement tests can be used to select students whose intellectual performances are very high.

Use of Intelligence Tests

The most popular approach in the identification of gifted children is the use of (individual and group) intelligence tests. Intelligence tests are psychological tests that are designed to measure a variety of mental functions, such as reasoning, comprehension and judgement. The goal of intelligence tests is to obtain an idea of the person's intellectual potential. The tests centre around a set of stimuli designed to yield a score based on the test maker's model of what makes up intelligence. Intelligence tests are often given as a part of a battery of tests.

A central criticism of intelligence tests is that psychologists and educators use these tests to distribute the limited resources of our society. These test results are used to provide rewards such as

special classes for gifted students, admission to College, and employment. Those who do not qualify for these resources, based on intelligence test scores may feel angry and as if the tests are denying them opportunities for success. Unfortunately, intelligence test scores have not only become associated with a person's ability to perform certain tasks, but with self-worth.

Many people are under the false assumption that intelligence tests measure a person's in born or biological intelligence. Intelligence tests are based on an individual's interaction with the environment and never exclusively measure inborn intelligence. The four most commonly used intelligence tests are:

- ❖ Stanford – Binet Intelligence Scales
- ❖ Wechsler – Adult Intelligence Scale
- ❖ Wechsler Intelligence Scale for children.
- ❖ Wechsler Primary and Preschool Scale of Intelligence

Use of Class Records

Class records are means of gathering information on a child's intellectual ability. Chauchau (2011) observed that school marks/cumulative records of pupils' achievement can give some indication of giftedness but however such marks should not be used as a strict measure to exclude children from gifted education programme. This is because a child may have poor class mark either because of a teacher's poor attitude or treatment towards him/ her or because of issues related to assessment itself.

Informal Identification

Observations, comments and reports of parents, peers, professional, the gifted person himself and teachers form what are known as informal tests. This implies that parents, peer groups, professionals like Medical doctors and nurses, the gifted child himself and the teachers can participate in the nomination of who can be referred to as a gifted child.

Parent Nomination

Parents are well placed to give information about the birth history of the child (Akinwale, 2015). Parents may observe, notice and nominate a child based on unusual abilities demonstrated by the

child believed to be beyond the abilities of that age. Such remarkable abilities and talents may be shown in artistic designs, drawings, painting, carving or in arrangement of toys, in leadership roles or in role models.

Peer Group Nomination

Peer group's comments may highlight useful talents and abilities noticed in the gifted/talented during play sessions which may not have been noticed by others (Akano, 2017). The gifted exhibit valuable behaviours of personality and social attributes in play time of which parents and teachers may be unaware of. Peers can nominate names of friends suspected to be gifted.

Professionals

Professionals like Doctors, Nurses, Teachers who come in contact with gifted/talented children from time of birth and thereafter may have useful comments and reports to give. Such reports may form part of the medical history showing the child's weight at birth and other noticed attributes of giftedness at different stages. Hence, Doctors, Nurses and other professionals may nominate gifted children by giving letters of referrals for further observation and examination to the authorities.

Self Nomination

The gifted/talented persons may be given a questionnaire with items on the characteristics of giftedness. They may be requested to agree or disagree with the statements shown on the questionnaire format. Children tick only the attributes that are common to them. Through this procedure, a gifted child can nominate himself when he ticks many of the items as obtainable in his own case.

Teacher Nomination

Teacher nomination is a strong form of assessment. Teachers are required to observe and record the performances of all children in their classes in respect of all subjects done in school. These are usually the child's scores on achievement tests and other school measures which indicate that the child is performing at a very high level in comparison with others in the class and age.

Teachers have different opinions, sentiments and attitudes that are not easy to control, therefore, teacher-nominations are not objective. Ajisafe (2015) comments that if teacher nomination were the only means of identification, people would have at one time or the other had problems in schools particularly those who would have had outstanding contributions in the society like Edison, Albert Einstein and Winston Churchill might have been missed at the stage of identification.

The Role of a Teacher in Managing Giftedness in the Classroom

While discussing managing giftedness in the classroom, reference is being made to the duties of the teachers who are handling them in the classroom. Nwazuoke (2003) observed that beyond the use of the computer, there are other management and instructional procedures, which the teacher could fall back on to meet the unique needs of the gifted child in the classroom. He went further to say that no one teaching approach is in itself sufficient to facilitate effective learning in the gifted child. Rather, a combination of instructional procedures will be quite helpful to the teaching-learning processes. It must be pointed out that a classroom teacher who has a positive attitudinal disposition towards the gifted child in the classroom, has better chances of success as a facilitator of the learning process than one who has low tolerance value for giftedness. A teacher who believes that a gifted child does not require any special help is likely to pay him scant attention in the classroom.

Nwazuoke (2003) observed that no single teacher can successfully meet all the unique needs of the gifted child in the classroom. The option open to the teacher is to adopt a number of strategies. An example of such strategy is the use of a community mentor. A mentor is someone found to be very successful and accomplished in his or her talent field. While using this strategy, opportunities are created for gifted children to relate with accomplished people in their various areas of interest. The reason for this is to encourage the children to model their lives on the lives of the mentors. Such mentors may be expected to deliver lectures, hold symposia or workshops for the children.

One other instructional procedure for managing giftedness in the classroom is bibliotherapy. Akinwale (2015) stressed that bibliotherapy involves primarily provision of well-chosen books to the gifted learners and the books in question must match their age, needs, aptitude, interests and ability levels. As a result of this, the classroom is expected to be large enough to accommodate classroom library where books can be kept. However, the classroom teacher would definitely require the services of a professional librarian in this matter. It is believed that bibliotherapy would help gifted children in thinking constructively and positively while at the same time increasing their level of abstraction.

Mental ability grouping is another instructional strategy which a teacher of the gifted children could adopt in the classroom. It is assumed here that children who belong to the same mental ability bracket are likely to achieve at a near uniform rate. The job of the teacher is always made easy when it is known that the children have identical mental ability. However, in cases where there are sharp differences either in the mental ability of the children or their subject aptitude, the teacher could resort to the use of the resource room technique called pull-out. Nwazuo (2003) stressed that as the name implies, a gifted student who requires individualized attention is "pulled" out of the classroom and taken to the resource room to be attended to by resource room personnel who themselves express considerable expertise in the child's area of need. At the end of the period, the child is returned to his regular class to continue with the others.

An instructional procedure which is related to the pull-out technique is a form of acceleration called telescoping (Nwazuo, 2003). In telescoping, a child is allowed to benefit from instruction at higher levels of study at given periods of the day after which he returns to his regular class. The child is granted this benefit in a subject where he has demonstrated outstanding promise or when it is known that the regular class material will look ordinary to him. Other forms of acceleration can be seen as double promotion or early admission into College.

Resource rooms could also be used as effective way of managing giftedness. Resource rooms should be adequately equipped with facilities that would help gifted students develop higher level cognitive skills, creativity and problem-solving skills (Nwazuoke, 2003). The resource room personnel are expected to be experts in the various skills areas to be able to assist the gifted children meaningfully. The assumption here is that some of the skills to be handled in the resource room may not easily be handled in the classroom. Another wonderful management technique that can be used to enhance giftedness in the school children is team teaching. In this case, two or three teachers may be teaching a subject in the classroom instead of one. One good thing about this method is that if one teacher has poor teaching methodology and the two others are good, the two good teachers will compensate for the bad one. The numerous gains derivable in team teaching the gifted child should outweigh arguments on the funding implications of such projects.

Akano (2017) in Nwazuoke (2003) is of the opinion that one other beautiful way to manage giftedness in the classroom is by engaging the services of an itinerant teacher to provide support to the classroom teacher. The function of an itinerant teacher is to move from one school to another, instructing students on a particular specialized skill or number of skills. To this extent, the itinerant teacher is a very knowledgeable person whose expertise may not be easily sourced within the school system. The days and times the itinerant teacher is expected to visit should be part of the overall framework in programme planning. In essence, the coming of the itinerant teacher should dovetail into the programme of the school in such a way that normal school activities are not disrupted.

Finally, peer tutoring has also been found to be another fantastic way of managing giftedness in the classroom. For example, in the classroom, a teacher may be quick to observe that some students are outstandingly superior to their fellow students in certain subject areas. Such students could be engaged to assist the teacher in teaching certain concepts to the class. Nwazuoke (2003) has described peer tutoring as a means of using some students to provide academic help to their peers. One major advantage of this

practice is that a child who teaches his peers will undoubtedly feel psychologically uplifted and fulfilled that he is able to assume the status of his teacher. Such an approach will imbue the tutor with heightened self-image, positive attitude to work and a sense of responsibility.

There are several other strategies, which the teacher can adopt to meet the challenge of giftedness in the classroom. Such strategies include experimentation, brainstorming, synectics, humour, independent study, unfinished stories, seminars, cluster/project groups etc. it must be pointed out that the scope of this paper is not elaborate enough to warrant detailed discussion of each strategy.

Conclusion

Christopher (2011) stressed that the ultimate goal of any good teacher is to ensure that each gifted student makes maximum use of the opportunities offered him. To realize this aim, the teacher is expected to be positively disposed towards the gifted children and the teaching industry. The teacher should embrace new ideas, flexible in the way he attempts to meet the various needs of the children, be an expert in his subject area and be highly humorous. Some of the strategies of nurturing gifted children demands that expertise be tapped from different talent fields and other professional colleagues. Collaboration is therefore needed between the teacher and other colleagues in the interest of the children. It must be pointed out that teachers who find their vocational skills unduly tasked by the gifted children should not hesitate to seek professional counsel from experts in the relevant area of knowledge.

Recommendations

When discussing about the main principles of managing giftedness in 21st century classroom. Ihenacho and Nwazuo (2012) stressed that in the education sector, networked information environment has brought about new main principles in teaching methods. These principles have in turn, provided real grounds for establishing active positioning for teachers and creative roles for learners. Based on this, the following recommendations could be made on the principles of teaching in the 21st century learning environment.

- ❖ Cooperative learning with students' initiative principles are recommended. This involves teachers/learners in mutually exploring, implementing and mastering new technologies and using them to learn.
- ❖ Contributory learning principles are also recommended. Here, the teacher should make students to work on projects that will involve participatory learning and contributory participation to produce the development of information resources equipment, design etc. Here it is presumed that wide use of computers, multimedia technologies among learners must have been put in place in the learning environment.
- ❖ Another thing that is being recommended is integration of traditional and distance learning principles. Here new networking environment provided by internet/intranet facilities remove differences between traditional and distance learning. The key here is on interactive on-line (conferencing) and off-line (e-mail mailing lists) communication between teachers and students.
- ❖ The principle of "Active-Position" is also recommended. Here, this involves the use of internet and new technologies in tight interaction by both students and teachers to facilitate and develop their own internet resource materials and create their own internet presentations.

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