



**Bahrain Teachers College
University of Bahrain**



Teachers' Perceptions of Giftedness and Children's Mental Health

Children's Mental Health Workshop
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Constantine Ngara

Introduction

Teachers' Perceptions of Giftedness

- Teachers often do initial nomination for either ADD/ADHD assessment or selection into gifted programming (Lloyd et al., 1991)
- Pre-service & beginning teachers generally do not receive sufficient training in gifted education (David & Rim, 2004)
- Symptoms of ADD/ADHD & giftedness seem to overlap and teachers often have problems in handling the overlap (Leroux & Levitt-Perlman, 2000)


Diagnosis of Giftedness

- Giftedness can be misdiagnosed in some children as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Rinn & Nelson, 2009).
 - e.g. Difficulty in paying attention and high levels of activity
 - Similar symptoms to ADD/ADHD e.g. bored & understimulated in regular class environment
 - Inattentiveness can result from mismatch of placement in an unstimulating environments
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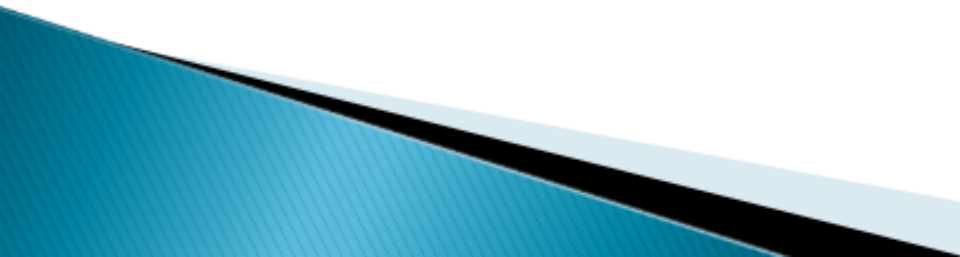
Diagnosis of Giftedness

- Gifted chn can also suffer from ADD/ADHD, but half the chn diagnosed with these disorders do not have significant impairments (Webb et al,2005)
- Misunderstanding of over-excitabilities (**Ref Dabrowski**) psychomotor, sensual, intellectual & emotional (Kitano, 1990;Piechowski, 1986)
- Over-excitabilities are heightened by means of experiencing “ringing loud and clear” e.g.
 - Psychomotor over-excitables individuals may speak rapidly, act impulsively, nervous habits, sleeplessness
 - Imaginational over-excitabilities may reflect daydreaming, fantasizing, dramatization, imagery friendship, magical thinking and metaphoric thought

Studies on Teachers' Perceptions of Giftedness

- Study 1 Sample: Teachers of different teaching qualifications and teaching experience
 - Study 2: Teachers with 1-10 years teaching experience
 - Regular classroom teachers with neither specialist training nor experience in special programming for gifted students
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Teachers' Beliefs

- Gifted students always score high marks Bahrain Teachers 77% vs 13.8% (Ngara, Al Mahdi, Ali Yar, current study)
 - Excelling in Language, Math and science as best indicator of giftedness (intellectual/ academic-domain) 63% agree vs 20%
 - Test achievement as indicator of giftedness 96%
 - Show great interest & expertise in certain subjects 86% vs 8.8%
 - Show creativity in performing tasks 86.3% vs 3.8%
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Teachers' Beliefs

- Acquire information and skills easily & quickly 85% vs 3.8%
- Gifted students can excel without putting effort 77.5% vs 13.8%
- Excel through natural ability 73% vs 12.5%
- Show good memory and retention of what they learn 80% vs 8.3%
- **Activity:** Examine these beliefs (in study 2) & comment on their likely implications to gifted children's mental health in schools


Implications For Gifted Children's Mental Health

- No recognition of diversity in giftedness & its spread across domains
 - No recognition of underachievers and late bloomers
 - Special education services are not necessary
 - Teachers believe in the mystery model of giftedness that is being criticised in dynamic thinking
 - Gifted children's special needs are not recognised
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Gifted Education Challenges

- Culturally & linguistically diverse students tend to be underrepresented in gifted programs
 - Hidden talents, cultural/differing ways of expressing giftedness are not recognised
 - Genius masked in diversity is not indentified (Ford, Harris, Tyson & Frazier Trotman, 2002)
 - Identification & Selection of First Nation students into gifted programs pose challenges to teachers (Coppersmith, 2001)
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Identification Challenges

- Definition of giftedness-narrowness of definition or differing definition
 - Use of defective/limited identification methods-the one size fit all approach
 - Underachievement of gifted cultural minority students
 - Giftedness may be masked with behaviour problems or other issues of exceptionality
 - (Labelling etc)
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Identification Challenges

- Conflicting values & expectations, communalist vs individualist (e.g. Gibson & Vialle, 2007)
 - Differing forms of giftedness, selective values
 - Sensitivity of gifted students-to social injustice, issues of dehumanizing labels & stereotypes (See The Mbira Metaphor-Ngara, 2009)
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Students' Perspectives on Teaching

- Rarely attended to.
- Question of how these perspectives develop over time in school
- Students learn better if their needs are taken into account




(Porath et al. 2009)

Discussions: Improving Identification of Gifted Students

- Viewing intelligence holistically Reference to Theory of Successful Intelligence (Sternberg, 1985)
 - Multiple intelligence approach-developing all possible domains of intelligence
 - Other cultures' approach-the non discriminative approach, improving learning contexts
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Diversity Sensitive Programming

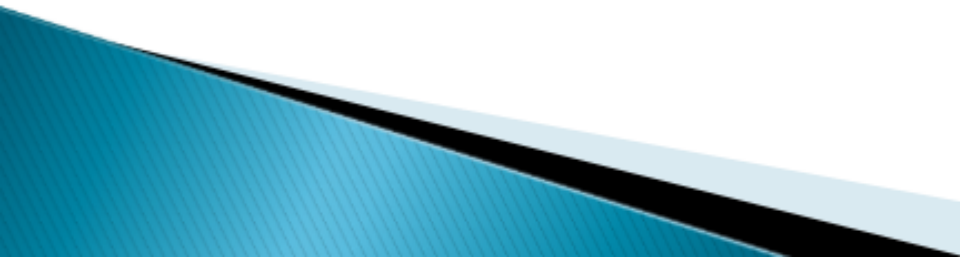
- Reducing the sense of alienation (learning about and from culture)
 - Relating school learning to what is true and valued in the child's society
 - Inspiring imagination & stimulating students' talents. Reference to experience with the artist Dominic Benhura (See slides)
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Stimulating Students' Imagination (Quotations from Elementary Students)

How do children respond to exciting & stimulating events in their lives?

- Ref. The Artist Dominic Benhura
- “I always love learning new things especially stuff that has to do with art.”
- “ He made me see art in a different way”
- ...Dominic was a real inspiration. His art was phenomenal to me. When I got home I started learning about him and his art techniques”
- “This memory will forever be embedded in my mind”

Group Discussion Sessions

- How would you meet the mental health needs of a fast learning student in your class?
 - How may working with a counsellor help to enhance the copying skills of at risk gifted students in school?
 - How may diagnosis or misdiagnosis of giftedness affect gifted children's mental health?
 - What challenges of mental health are likely to be experienced by gifted diverse students and teachers in the mainstream class?
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Anecdotes

- The Hare



- The Baboon



Gifted Children's Mental Health

- Optimistic/hopeful, confident
- Stimulated/ Sparkle in the eye/, motivated
- Satisfied with self-standards
- Wants to fly/Enjoys challenge

Positive Mental health

- Pessimistic, Psychosomatic illness
- Bored, frustrated/angry depressed
- Dreads monotony, suffer from adult standards & perfectionism
- Dreads failure/hide/ seek escape/ alienation
- Victim of stereotypes & alienation

Sensitive mental health

Definition of Giftedness

- Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in order for them to develop optimally. (Osborn, 1996)

Conclusion

- Ref: Our Teaching Guide on Diversity Sensitive Programming
- Further resources on display.
- E-mails and networking

Thank you

cngara@btc.uob.bh

cnga2010@gmail.com

Important Resources

- French, J.B. (2008). Trinity county Gifted and Talented Education *GATE Handbook Revised*
- Scott, E. (2011). *The Optimistic Child: Raise Your Children To Be Optimists*