

**A STUDY OF GIFTED CHILDREN IN RELATION TO CREATIVITY, ADJUSTMENT
AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN THE SECONDARY
SCHOOLS OF SHILLONG**

By

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "A STUDY OF GIFTED CHILDREN IN RELATION TO CREATIVITY, ADJUSTMENT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF SHILLONG" submitted by Ms. Flourette G.Dkhar in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong embodies the record of original research work carried out by her under my supervision. She has been duly registered and the thesis submitted is worthy of being considered for the award of the Ph.D degree.

This work has not been submitted for any other degree of any other university or institution.

Dated 30th May, 1995

(P.P.Gokulanathan)
Supervisor

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1:01 CONTEXT OF STUDY

Parents and educators alike are becoming more and more 'gifted conscious', and for very good reasons. Many gifted children and adolescents sit in their class room - their abilities unrecognised, their needs unmet. Some are bored patiently waiting for peers to learn skills and concepts that they had mastered two years earlier. Some find school intolerable, some feel pressured to hide their keen talents and skills from uninterested and unsympathetic peers. Some give up on school entirely, dropping out as soon as they are legally able (Davis and Rimm, 1989).

Other gifted students tolerate school but satisfy their intellectual, creative, or artistic needs outside of the formal system. The lucky ones have parents who will sponsor their dance or music lessons, chemistry kits and telescopes, art supplies, frequent trips to the library and home computers. The less fortunate ones make do as best they can, silently paying a price for a predicament that they may not understand, and that others choose to ignore. That price is lost academic growth, lost creative potential, and sometimes lost enthusiasm for educational success and eventual professional achievement (Davis and Rimm, 1989).

Some educators and many parents of non-gifted students are not swayed by the proposition that unrecognised and unsupported talent is wasted talent. A common reaction is, "Those kids will make it on their own", or "Give the extra help to kids who really need it" (Davis and Rimm, 1989 pp.1-2). The argument is that providing special services for highly able or talented is "elitist" - giving to the 'haves' and ignoring the 'have-nots' - and therefore, unfair and undemocratic.

However, a good argument can be made that gifted students have rights too, and that these rights are often ignored. Just as with other exceptional students, students with gifts and talents also deserve an education commensurate with their capabilities. It is unfair to them to ignore, or worse, to prevent the development of their special skills and abilities and to depress their educational aspirations and eventual career achievements. Our democratic system promises each person -regardless of racial, cultural or economic background and regardless of sex and handicapping condition - the opportunity to develop as an individual as far as that person's talents and motivation will permit. This guarantee seems to promise intrinsically that opportunities and training will be provided to help gifted and talented students realise their innate potential.

To those who argue that gifted students will "make it on their own", Davis and Rimm (1989, p.2) provide sensible replies that : (a) they should not be held back and required to succeed in spite of a frustrating educational system, and (b) some do not make it on their own. Nyquist (1973), for example, reported that a full 19 per cent of High School Drop outs are under-achievers, gifted/talented students who are unguided, uncounselled and unchallenged.

According to De Haan and Havighurst (1961), if potentialities/talents are to be systematically discovered, developed and utilised, society as a whole has certain general responsibilities. The democratic ideal of equal opportunity for all does not mean that all people should have identical opportunity. But it means that opportunity should commensurate with ability, that with high ability should go greater opportunity. It is not sufficient

however, simply to offer opportunity. Many gifted children will not accept it until they are shown these advantages. A democratic society should not have a laissez faire policy with respect to the gifted. It should actively seek them out, wherever they are, and attempt to stimulate them to take advantage of the educational opportunities that are available to them.

1:02 EXCLUSIVE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

It is, therefore, the business of the school to recognise and develop the potentialities, whether or not parents take any responsibility. For it is the school, as the major community institution which should help gifted children. According to De Haan and Havighurst (1961) two indispensable programmes should be carried out in the school. First, simply the discovery of the potentialities, and then the enrichment of experiences and essential training needed for developing the potentialities.

It is not only the gifted students themselves who benefit from specific programmes that recognise and cultivate their talents. According to Davis and Rimm (1989), teachers involved with gifted students learn to stimulate creative, artistic and scientific thinking, and they learn to help students understand themselves, develop good self concepts and value educational and career accomplishments. In short, teachers of the gifted become better teachers, and their skills benefit 'regular' students as well.

Society also reaps a profit. Realistically, it is only today's gifted and talented students who will become tomorrow's political leaders, medical researchers, artists, writers, innovative engineers, and business entrepreneurs. Indeed, it is difficult to propose that this essential talent be left to fend for itself - if it can - instead of being valued, identified

and cultivated. Hallahan and Kauffman (1988) have therefore, rightly pointed out that giftedness is something which is to be fostered, not eliminated. Tomorrow's promise is in today's schools, and it must not be ignored.

A programme of education for the gifted does not necessarily mean that other children will receive less attention in the schools. A good programme for the gifted will do what good education does for all kinds of people. It will fit the individual, whatever his abilities, and help him make the most of them.

1:03 GIFTEDNESS AND CREATIVITY

For many, creativity suggests the ability to produce a great painting, an intricate piece of pottery or winning a nobel prize. While all of these products are the result of creativity, the term also has a broader connotation. According to Greenlaw and Mc. Intosh (1988), Creativity involves production versus reproduction; divergent versus convergent thinking. The creative person is able to produce original ideas with fluency, flexibility, association and elaboration. Such ideas are not limited to any particular field such as art. Creativity may be manifested in science, the dance, urban planning, song writing, leadership, photography, architecture and so on. No apparent limit exists for the places where creativity is needed or the ways in which it may be revealed.

Since the early 1960's a great deal of attention, as it relates to giftedness, has been paid to creativity. Although creativity is not restricted to gifted, they are the ones in whom it is most likely to be developed and the ones in whom it is most expedient that it be cultivated. Treffinger (1986, p. 18) says, "Creativity can and should continue to be involved in giftedness in any area". According to Torrance (1979, p.362), people who try to make clear distinction between creativity and intelligence are involved

in a futile task. He believes the two are "interacting variables and that trying to force clear distinctions would create false distinctions which do not exist in real life".

The above has therefore, lead modern definitions of giftedness to include creativity, which is different from, but integrally related to intelligence.

1:04 GIFTEDNESS AND ADJUSTMENT

The term adjustment refers to a harmonious relationship between the person and the environment. According to Kundu and Tutoo (1985), the degree of harmony depends upon two things : (i) certain potentialities within a person; and (ii) character of the environment. A person is said to be adjusted when he is so related to reasonably adequate environment, that he is relatively happy, efficient, and has a degree of social feeling. In simple words, adjustment is an all inclusive term meaning relationship between an individual and his environment through which his needs are satisfied in accordance with social demands. The adjustment process is a universal sequence that can be identified in the behaviour of organisms from the lowest species up to man.

Intelligence as a concept has been understood in different ways by different psychologists and consequently there stands a wide variety of definitions and interpretations. In one of its definitions, an attempt was made by psychologists to link it with adjustment, for example, Wagnon (1937, p.401) defined it as, "the capacity to learn and adjust to relatively new and changing conditions". As per this definition, therefore, intelligence is the ability to make adjustment or to adapt to new situations, which implies that the more the intelligence, the greater is the adaptation of the individual with his environment and vice versa.

As seen from the above, intelligence plays an important role in determining the adjustment of the individual, then, it therefore leads us to conclude that there is a relationship between giftedness and adjustment.

1:05 GIFTEDNESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

According to Pendarvis, Howley and Howley (1990) on almost any index of school performance, students with High IQ scores, tend as a group, to score above average. Their scores on academic achievement tests are as high as those of older students and adults. They are more likely than other students to earn high grades, complete college and win academic honours. As adults, they tend to do well in scholastic careers.

Though from the above, one may conclude that High IQ or giftedness relates with high academic achievement, mention should however be made that high IQ does not always ensure superior school performance, since "some high IQ children drop out of school, earn poor grades, achieve far below expectancy, or exhibit mediocre aptitude"(Pendarvis, Howley and Howley, 1990, p.149).

1:06 NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

(i) The need and importance of the study can be related to one of Pearl Buck Stories of Chinese life, where Wang the tiger says, "The thing to do when one kills a centipede is to crush its head and then its hundred legs are ⁱⁿ confusion and they run hither and thither against each other and they are harmless"(Heck, 1953, p.374). Similarly, if we neglect the brilliant children of this nation, may we not find ourselves, to be a nation with a hundred well trained legs, but without a head, that would make ineffective the work of those legs.

(ii) The importance of such a study relates to the need of the society apart from the imperative arising out of a continuing revolution in the world of technology. India is faced with challenges whose urgency cannot be denied. Whether the country can face these internal as well as external challenges successfully will depend upon the quality of education given to gifted children.

(iii) According to ^{the} Challenge of Education (Government of India, 1986, Publication Number 1517), it has been noticed that the vast majority of students are not exposed to challenges which would develop their potential for creativity and innovation because the whole system of education is characterised by class work and examinations which emphasise rote learning and repetitive exercises.

To meet the above, gifted children should be exposed and provided with learning activities that would challenge them and expand and deepen their understanding.

(v) Very few studies have been conducted in our country in the area of gifted education. According to the Fourth Survey of Research in Education, till the year 1988, only 12 studies have been identified in this area.

Great emphasis has to be made on the fact that no survey as such had ever been conducted in Shillong, let alone the state of Meghalaya as a whole. Therefore, because of the absence of an accepted and standardized method of identifying gifted children who do occur in the population they remain dormant, and therefore not provided with an atmosphere within which they manifest and develop their potentialities. It thus follows that, Special Education for such children does not exist.

Who can we put the blame on? Surely, this is the joint responsibility of the State and University and they have to become more sensitive to the prevalence of gifted children in society and to plan to meet the special educational needs of gifted children, not only for the latter's gratification of personal drives but for the benefit of the State and society as a whole.

In the state of Meghalaya, the State Council of Educational Research and Training and some non-governmental organisations have tried to touch on this issue, but it is very much on the surface. They do recognise and encourage children of high academic performance in various schools and arrange to award them merit scholarships after successfully competing in a test. However, no special provisions are made to develop educational programme aimed to help widen the interests and abilities of the gifted.

1:07 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Basing on the need and importance of the study, the present work has been carried out under the following title : "A Study of Gifted Students in relation to their Creativity, Adjustment and Academic Achievement in the Secondary Schools of Shillong".

1:08 DEFINITION OF TERMS

In the study, gifted students are taken to mean children and adolescents who are identified at the Secondary level as possessing high intellectual ability.

Creativity is referred to as a functioning of divergent thinking where its primary traits of originality and elaboration are emphasised.

Adjustment is taken to mean the degree of capacity by which an individual tries to cope up with inner tension, needs, conflicts, frustration with particular reference to social, emotional and educational aspects.

By academic achievement is meant the performance of the students in the various subjects in the final school examination.

Enrichment is taken as providing learning activities that challenge the child and expand and deepen its understanding.

1:09 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The first part of the study which dealt with the identification of gifted children, the study was confined to 1,400 secondary school students. For identifying the gifted children, mainly a Culture Fair Test (Cattell, 1961) which is a standardized one was given to them. Thus, the fluid ability, "gf" of the students was measured. In doing this the crystallized general ability "gc" of the students, which is culture bound was not taken into consideration (Cattell, 1968).

After the gifted children were identified, the study was then confined only to the gifted group comprising of 390 students where all above average students and above were taken to form the group. To study about their Creativity, Adjustment and Academic Achievement, a Non-Verbal test of creative thinking, an Adjustment Inventory which emphasised on the Emotional, Social and Educational aspects and the annual marks of the students in the various subjects respectively were used.

Lastly, the study involved the development of an enrichment programme, where it was planned that it would meet the needs of only the Very Superior and Superior groups of children.

1:10 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were the following:

- (i) To identify gifted students from the High Schools of Shillong.
- (ii) To assess the Creativity of gifted students.

(iii) To find out the differences in creativity among students at different levels of giftedness.

(iv) To find out the level of adjustment of gifted students.

(v) To find out the differences in adjustment among students with different levels of giftedness.

(vi) To assess the level of academic achievement of gifted students.

(vii) To find out the differences in academic development among students at different levels of giftedness.

(viii) To suggest outlines for the development of an enrichment programme for the gifted students.

1:11 DELIMITATIONS

The following are the main delimitations:

(i) Hypotheses were not framed for the study.

(ii) The sample was confined mainly to the urban Secondary/High Schools of Shillong.

(iii) In relation to giftedness the study is delimited only to the intellectually gifted children (i.e all children with Above Average Intelligence and above).

(iv) With reference to intelligence and creativity, though Verbal tests are there, yet in the study only non-verbal tests were used.

(v) Though the enrichment programme was planned and developed for the Very Superior and Superior groups, it has not been tried out on them.