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## REFLECTIONS ON THE VALUES OF GIFTED CHILDREN<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

The spirit of new time bears the seal of extremely smart and technologically intelligent entities, which see the world from multiple, heterogeneous perspectives. One of these perspective is certainly the ethical horizon of human creativity. This paper takes an in-depth look at the modern concepts, definitions, and theories connected with analysis of moral characteristics of gifted and talented children. Focusing on these two broad areas of inquiry (morality and giftedness), the text aims to examine their overlap and interconnection. More specifically, the paper explores role of the ethical awareness of the gifted and talented children in the process of social values development. Also, the text may be used by educators and other professionals, who work with children and their families, as a summary overview of the main elements for recognition of the giftedness and talents among the children.

**KEY WORDS:** education, ethics, giftedness, values

### INTRODUCTION

*It is not enough to have a good mind, the main thing is to use it well.*  
Rene Descartes

People are motivated to research and be competent in functioning in their environments. According to many experts from the field of education, the main goal of any educational system should be the moral development of the individual. Building the character virtues of the young in school teachers

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<sup>1</sup> review scientific paper

will generate transformative changes in society (Arthur and all, 2017). In context of the social environment, this leads to imitating models and roles that children consider authoritative. Thus, in early childhood, evidence of the correctness of the child's actions are the actions of adult models. Likewise, there are common patterns of social life, such as families, peer groups, institutions, which influence young people with their schemes of functioning. In this regard, the stages of moral development of young people correspond to the order of progressive-inclusive social circles. Within these social circles, they want to work competently and prove themselves. When these groups function well and are governed by caring and respect, young people adjust to adulthood and strive for justice. Consequently, each stage of moral and cognitive development in man is closely connected with the conscious reflection on the relations of justice, care and respect exposed in a wider circle of social relations. The higher stages of moral development provide the person with greater capacities (abilities) for making ethical decisions.

The relationship between giftedness and moral development is complex. One does not have to be gifted to be moral, and the gifted are capable of incredibly destructive, immoral behavior. However, many experts have observed that gifted children express moral concerns at a younger age and in a more intensified manner than their age peers, and some of them suggest that moral sensitivity increases with intelligence (Roeper & Silverman, 2009). In the recent scientific studies positive correlation has been found between moral reasoning and IQ scores (Ozbey & Saricam, 2016). Bearing in mind the specific structure of personality traits in the gifted and talented, we can easily recognize the relationship between creativity and imagination, on one hand, and morality, on other hand. Therefore, the combination of intellect and creativity of man can be called talent. Some thinkers (Campbell & Mazzoli Smith, 2013) claim that many gifted children show a sense of righteousness and empathy from an early age. It has also connected with the fact that gifted children show higher intellectual achievement and acquire ability to reason morally earlier than their peers. Such children often care for others and show capacity to think about abstract ethical terms as justice and honesty. It is logically that any term for moral judgment requires a moral paradigm adequate to the child's imagination and creativity. Many talented children also use their moral imagination to make moral decisions. They are endowed with their ability to imagine what would happen if their rules of conduct became universal rules for the behavior of all people (Lovecky, 1997).

Each child has the right to be appreciated as an individual and receive an education adequate to his or her potential. At the same time, Pedagogical

programs of quality education could be enhanced by creating an environment of acceptance of all level's of intelligence, creativity and sensitivity in the reaching individual maximum in the cognitive and affective development of children.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED CHILDREN**

The results of numerous studies, applied on the giftedness, show that gifted children fit more comfortably, socially and emotionally to the environment. As they rapidly grasp social values of the environment they live in, they are extremely successful in adaptation, maturing in interaction with the outside world. Also, gifted children have flexible, compassionate and constructive attitudes towards their environment and significant influence in the increase of love, awareness and tolerance among the peers. Many of them have higher religious and spiritual potential than other children. The gifted children have high levels of sensitiveness and compassion towards other people. At the same time they are very opened to people's feelings. Therefore, when they could not produce solutions to negative events in progress, they feel desperate and even worse and guilty. This emotional state of gifted children is often misunderstood by other people (Ozbey & Saricam, 2016).

According to Narvaez and Lapsley (2013), gifted children have some specific characteristics. For example, they express emotions more powerful than their peers. Taking the perspective of other, they care by connecting to others. The individual judgment of gifted and talented children is based on personal, autonomous moral principles. These children become aware very early that although there are rules, laws and conventional norms for good behavior (which are accepted by most people), however there are still times when those rules of good behavior work against the interests of certain individuals or groups of people. That is why they have developed their own code of morality that may or may not match the conventional level of good behavior. Gifted and talented children are willing to act defending their moral principles even if it means going against the conventional cliché in society, that is, paying the consequences of disapproval. Gifted children, because of their greater facility for abstract reasoning, have complex inner lives, early ethical concerns, and heightened awareness of the world. Finally, they feel responsible for universal problems to an extent that they can dedicate themselves to problems of all living things. Their sensitivity, perfectionism and introversion often are on the the verge of an emotional over excitability. According to Silverman (2019), the gifted children have characteristics such as: emotional ties and attachments, concern for others

(empathy), sensitivity in relationships, self-evaluation and self-judgment, feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. Introversions, often perceived negatively in our extraverted society, is actually a developmentally positive trait since it indicates the capacity of children to inhibit aggression. Because of that, Dabrowski described gifted as: “delicate, gentle, sensitive, empathic, nonaggressive, industrious, wise though unsophisticated, never brutal, often inhibited, likely to withdraw into themselves rather than retaliate, having deep feelings, idealistic” (Dabrowski, 1994, pp. 87-90). Dąbrowski has considered that psychological tension and anxiety are necessary for ethical growth of the children. Beginning from the childhood, until the old age, an individual begins to develop an inner core of hierarchical values and to conduct the life-long struggle for them. The gifted children learn to adjust to personal ideals since early childhood and later, as show the recent researches, they live according to those ideals. Because they have strong and unshakable values, they have an intense inner conflicts occur from the their high ideals and ethical standards. They are able to accept themselves and others, have a strong sense of responsibility, and are committed to serving others. They exhibit strong empathy, compassion, and self-awareness (Bainbridge, 2020).

Creatively gifted children have more pronounced responses to various types of stimuli. They have a capability for powerful psychomotor, sensual, imaginal, intellectual and emotional excitation. The over excitabilities may be thought of as an abundance of physical energy, heightened acuity of the senses, vivid imagination, intellectual curiosity and drive, and a deep capacity to care (Silverman, 2011). It has often been said that individuals at the high end of the intellectual continuum vary from each other more than any other group, regardless of age. According to Tolan (2007), extreme variation is true for abilities, passions, personality, temperament, social/emotional issues and life experience. It may be especially true about spirituality, which partakes of all those other differences and is so fundamentally personal.

For better understanding and recognizing gifted children, some researchers have developed scheme with four domains in which have classified their characteristics (Clark, 2007). We can speak about cognitive, creative, affective and behavioral features. For example, in the behavioral domain Clark has listed these characteristics of the gifted children: spontaneity, boundless enthusiasm, highly energetic needs, impulsiveness, perseverance, strong determination in areas of importance, high levels of frustration, particularly when having difficulty meeting standards of performance (either imposed by self or others).

## ETHICAL PATTERNS IN EDUCATION OF GIFTED CHILDREN

Good character matters to individuals and society. The qualities which make up character can be learnt and taught. Because of that, in the kindergartens and the schools should be put an emphasis on the teachers' role as ethical models and aspirators for ethical behavior among the children. Character values and the giftedness are positive personal traits that arise under common umbrella. Therefore, on the one hand, the character education help children grasp what is ethically important and how to act for the right reasons so that they can become more autonomous and reflective individuals within the framework of a democratic society. On the other hand, such kind of education stimulates emotional intelligence as a basis for human values development (Arthur and all, 2017). Educators are confronting the issue of meeting the specific moral needs of the gifted and talented in the development of programs which foster reasoning. However, little has been done to substantiate the special abilities and needs gifted children possess in the realm of moral reasoning (Milesnick Sager, 1983). Accordingly, moral development in gifted and talented closely corresponds to their cognitive and spiritual development. The teachers need to be prepared to work with gifted and talented students. They should create a program that matches their individual learning needs and accelerates learning by extending children's skills. The schools must be able to identify a high-achieving students who needs more depth and complexity in teaching. Because of that, the experts suggest that not only the teachers, but also the parents and the wide society should find a way to reward creativity of the children. They should allow children to engage in creative process because of their inner will to do so, not because of reward incentives. Also, the teachers should find out what it is that the child loves to do and support him in that. With other words, important is children to focus on the creative process, not on the end result. Therefore, a crucial task of teachers is to talk with children about their work and about their feelings towards the own creations. It is not so easy to understand a child's drawing and the message that is sent to us through it. It is necessary to penetrate in children's' deep motives for certain types of aesthetic expressions.

There are many successful, well adjusted gifted children with unusually advanced intellectual abilities. They have independence of thought, and highly superior problem-solving strategies. However, lack of attention to the ethical and emotional needs of gifted and talented children creates developmental problems among them. With accelerating the degree of their ability for achieving a high level of compassion with the around world, increases the degree of maladjustment of their emotions with their physical,

emotional and intellectual maturation. Because of that, they are often misunderstood and unhappy. According to Lightcap (1985), sometimes other pupils ridicule the gifted children, even torment them, because they always have the answer first and never seem to make a mistake. In this context, the gifted and talented children often feel boredom at school or have a strong desire to be accepted by their peers in school and non-school activities. The problem of non-recognition of the children giftedness from the side of teachers exists at schools long time. Traditionally, teachers have been ineffective in this area. When asked to identify gifted students, they tended to select average pupils with good work habits. Also, overemphasis on teacher marks and a single I.Q. test score proved detrimental (George & Crescimbeni, 1966). The expanded definition of giftedness increased the importance of teacher judgment in the identification process. It is necessary to provide an identification program which will be reasonably effective and efficient and which will help these children to avoid the problems with parental support and appropriate gifted programs in the schools.

## CONCLUSION

It is well-known that the difference which nature has placed between one man and another is so wide. Also, the difference which comes by religion, cultural habits, intellectual capacities, creativity, giftedness and similar elements in the human life is still so much further enlarged by education. Because of that, the school has an important role in managing these processes. The key question raised in front of the education today is what are the rules for moral behavior of young people in the new paradigm of living or whether the values of modern society can be taught in the classroom with traditional methodology in the teaching? At the first glance, „new pedagogical ethics“, should to help of the young population to find own attitude towards the values and provide them the reasons why they should be moral. In other words, the main ethical principle in the new educational systems is belief that the person should be free to learn what he wants and that the human feelings are also considerable as are the facts (Maubant & Roger, 2010). But, it is difficult to achieve it at a time when there is a general decadence of values and public revolt against any kind of authority, i.e., at a time when traditional ethical values are empty for young people. Maybe it is closely linked with the fact that the moral being of the person, on its merits, doesn't always promise happiness.

In the last ten years the educational system in our country was undergoing radical changes in area of designing curricula, establishing of models for assessment, improving of the conditions for schooling and

promoting of professional development for the teaching staff. The initiative for these reforms has emerged from combination of numerous and significant social and political events in the country. In this context, the interest of our educational system on gifted and talented grow up over the recent years. Development teachers' capacities and abilities to perceive the morally sensitive inner world of the gifted and talented children become the main purpose in the educational efforts in the country. Of course, it will depend on how we think and act in different situations of school life as teachers and as human beings because the educational principles in the teaching and in the communication with children actually are fundamentally moral principles. The cognitive complexity and certain personality traits of the gifted create unique experiences and awareness that separate them from other children. According to the newest studies, many parents have reported that their gifted children seemed to have an innate sense of right and wrong. There are dozens of cases on record of gifted children fighting injustice, befriending and protecting handicapped children, conserving resources, responding to others' emotional needs, becoming terribly upset if a classmate is humiliated et cetera (Silverman, 2011). In the line with such researches' results, we can conclude that a central feature of the gifted experience is their moral sensitivity, which is essential to the welfare of the entire society. But, for the parents and for the teachers remains open question yet how to manage the problems arisen from the specific ethical attitudes and values of the gifted and talented children if they are ignored or mishandled. If we accept the view that education has an important role in the process of creating social values, then we can conclude that the basic task of educators and teachers is not only to prepare young people for competitiveness for the labor market, but also, their task is to prepare them for community life, i.e. to help them become good and virtuous citizens of a democratic society. A good education must find the way to the right balance between knowledge, giftedness and values.

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