

THE GIFTED STUDENTS: PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND PROBLEM SOLUTIONS TECHNIQUES

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Abstract. Gifted individuals always existed in society, yet the scientific study of giftedness only began in the second half of the 20th century, large-scale studies of giftedness have recently been published. Several psychological studies of gifted children have been conducted, albeit, no unifying theoretical and methodological has emerged that enables a full understanding of the complexities of the giftedness phenomena. Social psychological studies show that gifted children study in uniquely individual ways and that there is no consistency in how gifted children approach academics. It is of interest to note, that most research focuses on gifted school age children and only a few deal with gifted preschoolers, but what happens with these children after their school finishing? The literature also lacks studies that follow up on gifted children once they complete secondary school. The few studies that do follow up on post-secondary school aged children show contradictory outcomes. That is why, it is much better to prepare gifted schoolchildren to such conditions in the high school. Educational center “Sirius” - is one of the places for gifted children's talents mastering that was founded in Sochi in 2014. To figure out how successfully does this center perform their functions and what attitude to this center activities the gifted children have empirical research was conducted. Content-analyses was taken as the main research method. Unit of analyses is statement correlated to one of the categories. Based on current theories and children's statements, the following categories were developed: 1) “Organization of life-sustaining activities” (statements concerned with nutrition, center location, living conditions, features of educational activity), 2) “Sirius characteristics”, 3) “giftedness” (personal and other children), 4) “interpersonal relationships” (with adults and children), 5) “summative assessment”. Statements that were not related to any of the above categories were put into the “Other” category. The statements posted on the official web-sites of sochisirius.ru and otzovik.com since April 2017 to April 2019 were analyzed, 100 children “Sirius” students and 4 their parents. Students at “Sirius” enjoyed the sea, food, living in a 4-star hotel, windows but few

considered the center as an educational program that furthers their interests and potential. It is surprising that so few statements were made about interpersonal relationships since this is a period of development where relationships are salient in the life of a teenager. In sum, gifted children are not protected from social-emotional problems as their peers, but they are complicated with more specific problems. There are interrelationships problems with other people (peers and adults). It is proved by our research and by researches of other authors. Undoubtedly, the students who submitted statements are interested in attending Russia's universities to further their education, talents and potential. To ensure the success of gifted individuals in academics and society we need evidence-based practices for educating and supporting these individuals in various life transitions. Perhaps one of the areas that requires focus is the social psychological welfare of gifted children. Research can focus on problems of socialization so that programs can incorporate elements of good practices resulting in successful socialization with minimum social problems.

Keywords: gifted students, interpersonal relationships, socialization, higher educational

Introduction

Gifted individuals always existed in society, yet the scientific study of giftedness only began in the second half of the 20th century. Large-scale studies of giftedness have recently been published, resulting in its popularity and prominence as a scientific pursuit. One of the areas of interest in the study of giftedness was how to nurture creatively gifted children. In Russia, various government programs were developed and implemented which focused on how to teach gifted children. These programs took into consideration the advantages and disadvantages in teaching gifted children. Several psychological studies of gifted children have been conducted, albeit, no unifying theoretical and methodological has emerged that enables a full understanding of the complexities of the giftedness phenomena (Ivleva, Inozemzcev, 2014, Ivleva, 2017 and etc.). Currently, there are several conceptions in understanding giftedness. One approach is that the gifted child will attain greatness in one or several areas, such as: communication, leadership, art intellect, sports, academics or creativity (Blinova, 2010). Additionally, it is speculated that there is a latent giftedness which is undetectable (Speshilova, 2013).

The literature reveals that gifted children face difficulties in several areas. Gifted children may have difficult relationships with adults (teachers and parents) and with their peers; and may even face difficulties in the learning process itself (Speshilova, 2013, Karamaeva, 2005 and etc.). Social

psychological studies show that gifted children study in uniquely individual ways and that there is no consistency in how gifted children approach academics. Furthermore, teachers vary in how they react to gifted students. For example, some studies demonstrate that teachers have positive reactions toward their gifted students since they are able to learn material quickly; on the other hand, other studies show that teachers have negative reactions toward gifted students because of the large discrepancy between their social and cognitive abilities. (Electronic Journal “Psychological science and education”, 2013).

Some research shows that gifted children are affected by bullying from their peers and classmates which then leads to social isolation (Peterson, 2006 and etc.). While other research studies indicate that social isolation of gifted children results from the negative social feedback obtained due to their unique abilities (Gross, Rimm, 2002). Another issue which has direct impact how society and agencies should educate and socialize gifted children is their level of social maturity. Currently, there are inconsistent results examining socialization of gifted children – some studies indicate difficulties in the socialization process, while other studies do not (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004).

A large number of studies conducted all over the globe show consistency in the types of issues confronted when considering educating, nurturing and socializing gifted children. The solutions to the problems surrounding gifted children is not exclusive to the scientific community but also to society as it seeks out the best practices in education and socialization of their gifted populations. It is of interest to note, that most research focuses on gifted school age children and only a few deal with gifted preschoolers (Novikova G.P., 2013). The literature also lacks studies that follow up on gifted children once they complete secondary school. The few studies that do follow up on post-secondary school aged children show contradictory outcomes. According to one study, most gifted children do extremely well during their university years largely due to the many resources provided in university settings to further develop a gifted individual’s potential and abilities (Muratori, M. C., Colangelo, N. & Assouline, 2003). Therefore, an important line of research is follow up pre and post university years. Some longitudinal research finds that gifted teenagers who attend higher education suffer from the difficulties confronted by university bureaucracies, time management problems, family separation, pressure to achieve high academic standards which can lead to depression, financial distress, etc. (Robinson, 2004). It is recommended that gifted teenager should be prepared for university life during their high school training.

One educational center located in Sochi called “Sirius” was founded in

2014; it specializes as a place that enables gifted children to fulfill their unique potential and talents. A research question that I would like to answer is: what does Sirius do to fulfill its mission and what are the views/attitudes held by their gifted students.

Purpose of the study is to study gifted children's attitudes toward the curriculum provided by the Sirius center.

Methods: content-analyses. Unit of analyses are student statements. These statements will then be categorized. Based on current theories and children's statements, the following categories were developed: 1) "Organization of life-sustaining activities" (statements concerned with nutrition, center location, living conditions, features of educational activity), 2) "Sirius characteristics", 3) "giftedness" (personal and other children), 4) "interpersonal relationships" (with adults and children), 5) "summative assessment". Statements that were not related to any of the above categories were put into the "Other category".

Statements posted on the official web-sites of sochisirius.ru and otzovik.com from April 2017 to April 2019 were analyzed. Some statements did not contain age information; however, only individuals between the ages of 10-17 years can attend the center.

Results

Approximately 800 students are served by the Sirius center each month. A total 100 students submitted statements posted on the two websites which consisted of 324 statements from students and 29 from parents yielding a total of 353 statements which were used for the analysis. Out of the 100 students 45 submitted statements that were only one sentence long, and a total of 11 individuals submitted statements that were longer than a single sentence.

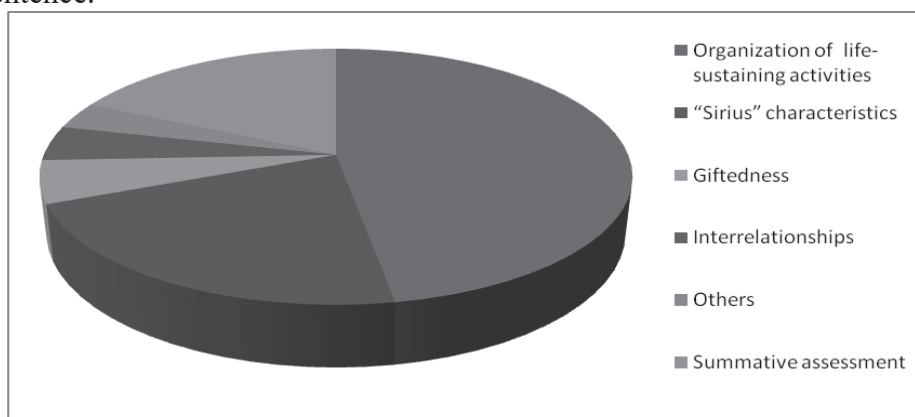


Figure 1 - Students attitude to life-sustaining activities in educational center of "Sirius"

As depicted in Fig 1, the majority of student statements submitted (156 or 48 %) involved “Organization of life-sustaining activities”. Most statements made in this category (90%) were positive. Student made references regarding the center and the activities (e.g. “classes are very interesting”, “beautiful place”, “tasty food”). The 10% negative statements referred to things such as “feeble shower”, “equipment condition”, “little time for music classes”, “little football pinch”, “prison regulations”.

Interestingly, Sirius was described as an educational center only in 21 out of 64 statements. Fifty-five of these statements were about studying (51 made positive references and 4 were negative). Therefore, only 17% of all “Organization of life-sustaining activities” statements were about the educational aspects of the center.

Probably, it explains their little quantity of “Giftedness” statements (their own and others). There was one statement about own giftedness but in veiled view (“... not a worthless person as I considered before”). Others giftedness is mainly revealed in formal positive assessments of the center (“center of gifted children”).

Only a total of 6 statements involved interpersonal relationships between children (4 were positive and 2 were negative). This is in stark contrast to the number of statements made (16 statements) about good meals. This is very few (1,8 % of the total amount).

There were 8 statements about relationships with adults (2,4% of the total amount, 4 positive and 4 negative ones). This is the only category where the same number of positive and negative statements was noticed. What don't students like in this center? They don't like communication by “caps lock voice”, there is nothing to do by yourself, strict control for children”, rude staff like on a collective farm”. Student's mum pointed out that “the worst moment for my child was in communicating with staff, almost all other children had the same problems”. For being honest, it is necessary to mark that there were statements of other people (8) but they were abstractive, that is why it was difficult to detect who exactly it was about. For example, all people are “wonderful”.

The category of Summative assessment contained a total of 28 statements; 21 of these statements were positive. Examples of positive statements in summative assessment category were the following: I will remember Sirius for the rest of my life, “Sirius” I love you and not a bad organization.

In conclusion, the analyses indicated that most students liked their experiences at Sirius; statements expressed the following sentiments: this place is divine; small joy for a month; this is something unusual and the best place in this country. Students at Sirius enjoyed the sea, food, living in a 4-star hotel, windows but few considered the center as an educational program

that furthers their interests and potential. It is surprising that so few statements were made about interpersonal relationships since this is a period of development where relationships are salient in the life of a teenager. Maybe, children don't like strict discipline in "Sirius" because they are just teenagers.

Discussion

In sum, gifted children also experience the same social-emotional problems faced by their non-gifted peers, but these problems are further complicated. Specifically, there are interpersonal relationship problems with both peers and adults as demonstrated in this study and others (Gross, Rimm, 2002; Peterson & Ray, 2006; Karamaeva, 2014, 2015).

Undoubtedly, the students who submitted statements are interested in attending Russia's universities to further their education, talents and potential. However, a question arises concerning their success in Russia's higher educational system. Gifted teenagers with low self-esteem or those with poor self-awareness and empathy as well as those who lacked social skills may not fare well in higher educational settings.

Are the expectations of gifted teenagers realistic to succeed in Russia's higher education system? As one Sirius participant wrote: "unique center, expensive, modern, in general everything is good. But where will these children go? The country is not ready for them. It is early for working, there is nothing to do at universities".

To ensure the success of gifted individuals in academics and society we need evidence-based practices for educating and supporting these individuals in various life transitions. Perhaps one of the areas that requires focus is the social psychological welfare of gifted children. Research can focus on problems of socialization so that programs can incorporate elements of good practices resulting in successful socialization with minimum social problems.

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