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THE GIFTED CHILD
AN ART TEACHERS GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Gifted students in our schools are victims of many current beliefs and practices that prevent adequate attention being given to their superior abilities. Such students do not receive appropriate attention in the classroom because all too often the student is not easily identifiable. There is a need to find an acceptable definition which will assist the teacher in identification of these students. In chapter one I will concentrate on the definition of "Gifted Children" and what the term giftedness implies.

In determining whether a child is or is not gifted many factors must be taken into consideration besides his performance on intelligence tests. These factors include the gifted child's physical, emotional and social characteristics. Once identified it is then important to assess the needs of the gifted so they may be catered for. Needless to say the gifted have very special needs and I will outline these in Chapter Two.

Educators have come up with three ways of dealing with gifted children (1) acceleration, (2) segregation and (3) enrichment. Chapter Three will assess the best way of dealing with gifted children in our education system. I will also look at facilities open to the gifted child and how we can improve on the current situation.

Creativity could be described and has been seen as the highest expression of giftedness. Many creative and artistically talented students desperately need help in recognising the value of their talents. Chapter Four will contain details of this group's special characteristics and needs with suggestions for ways in which they may be catered for in our education system.

CHAPTER 1. GIFTEDNESS

IN SEARCH OF A DEFINITION

All human societies concerned with advancements, both humanitarian and technological, have become conscious of the need to identify and nurture those of its members who have exceptional talents. There has been a growing interest in the identification of gifted children. Definitions of giftedness vary somewhat but a widely accepted method is to identify those with IQ's of 130 or more on an individual test of intelligence. A variety of tests are available. However, the WISC-R is probably the most reliable and is the most widely used test in this country for children up to 16 years of age.

The characteristics of intelligent people as found in a study of Cornell undergraduates shows:

1. Broad General Knowledge
2. Ability to think logically
3. Common Sense
4. Wit
5. Creativity
6. Openness to new experience
7. Sensitivity to ones own limitations.

It may be interesting to compare this list to that compiled by the United States Office of Education (USOE) on a definition of gifted children.

They are capable of high performance including those who demonstrated any of the following abilities or aptitudes singly or in combinations:

1. General intellectual ability,
2. Specific academic aptitude
3. Creative or productive thinking
4. Leadership ability
5. Visual and performing arts aptitude
6. Psychomotor ability (Marland 1972) ⁽¹⁾

This widely used definition is by no means perfect. However a measure of its reliability is evident in its use by Her Majesty Inspectorate (H.M.I.) in a series of inspections of very able pupils in primary and secondary schools published in March 1992. So we can infer from this that it does have its relevance to this date. ⁽²⁾

However, referring back to research carried out by an innovator of intelligence testing and gifted child classification like Lewis Terman, we should find his definition of giftedness to be "the top 1% level in general intellectual ability as measured by the Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale or a comparable instrument". ⁽³⁾

This definition is somewhat limiting to a good percentage of gifted individuals. Terman and his associates carried out a study of 643 gifted children from childhood through to adulthood and the original subjects were followed

through to old age. As already stated he took the top 1% of children that scored 140IQ on the Stanford Binet test but this should not mean that an individual with an IQ of 139 or 129 is not gifted and caution must be applied when studying the findings from such rigid tests.

Terman's research was carried out until the subjects were sixty years of age - past Terman's death, and some may argue with his findings but one set of initial findings are hard to argue with.

The initial findings indicated that the children were above average in physical development, social adjustment and social achievement.⁽⁴⁾

This finding is most interesting and should be noted in the discussion of the characteristics of gifted children.

A more literal definition of giftedness is defined by Paul Witty;

"There are children whose outstanding potentials in art, in writing or in social leadership can be recognised largely by their performance. Hence, we have recommended that the definition of giftedness be expanded and that we consider any child gifted whose performance in a potentially valuable line of human activities, consistently remarkable."⁽⁵⁾

A definition such as this may be just as alarming to some as Terman's more conservative findings. A definition is not easily found, as one can see.

A further attempt to satisfy the need for a definition is provided by the British Department of Education and Science in relation to gifted children in middle and comprehensive schools ages 8-18 years. They suggest that gifted children are those:

- (a) who are generally recognised by their schools as being of all round intellectual ability confirmed where possible by a reliable individual intelligence test giving an IQ of 130 or more, or:
- (b) who exhibit a markedly superior developmental level of performance and achievement which has been consistent from earlier years, or,
- (c) of whom fairly confident predictions are being made as to continual rapid progress towards outstanding achievement either in academic areas or in music, sport, dance or art and whose abilities are not primarily attributable to purely physical development⁽⁶⁾.

Perhaps this may be described as a compromise between the definition proposed by Terman or that of Witty.

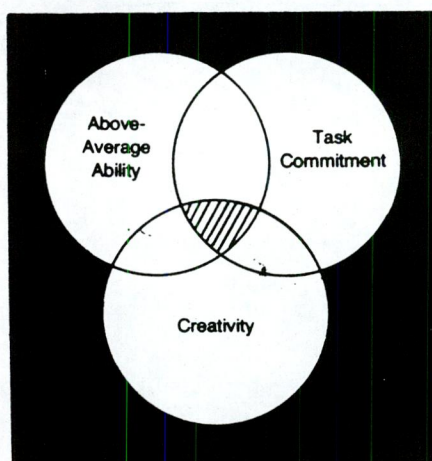
It is generally recognised that intellectual activities and creative endeavours are consistently included in definitions of the gifted. However, sport and leadership

qualities are sometimes left out. A new "gift" is considered of great importance in Western Society at this time and it is enterprise. Increasing attention has been given to it with the growth of the role of technology within our education system. The Green Paper on Education has listed technology and enterprise as two important areas to be developed. However some leading business people and entrepreneurs consider "Enterprise" to be a gift and something that cannot be taught properly in schools or lecture halls. Should enterprise be included in future classifications of the gifted?

Moving on to a definition, that is of particular interest to those gifted individuals with a strong artistic leaning, we see new attributes strongly emerging. This definition by Renzulli is described as the three-ring conception. It can best be explained through a diagram.

Fig 1.1

INGREDIENTS OF GIFTEDNESS



Above-Average General Ability

Three Ring Concept

It is important to note that no ring exists on its own and the identification of giftedness it is important that all three clusters exist in unison and that no cluster should emerge or be over emphasised at the expense of the other two.

Therefore the suggestion that only those of an IQ of over 130 or 140 should be gifted is in some way over looking two other contributing factors of giftedness. The three ring concept strengthens the importance of creativity in defining the gifted. Creativity is on the list of intelligence factors shown above. It is also features in the U.S.O.E. definition and in Witty's liberal definition. What does creativity imply in the educational systems in Western culture? How often is a child referred to the art department because he/she is not good enough to do science? If a creative child is good all round, they may be advised to do art outside of school. However, I will deal with creativity in a later chapter as it is of such importance as a contributing factor to giftedness it needs to be treated in such a manner.

In order to identify gifted individuals, it is necessary to look out for certain characteristics which they may possess. In school children at primary level the following characteristics help the parent/teacher identify the gifted child:

1. Possesses superior reasoning, abstraction and comprehension.
2. Has intellectual curiosity and recall (short and long term).
3. Learns easily and rapidly with high attention span when interested.
4. Superior in quantity and quality of vocabulary.
5. Possesses unusual imagination.
6. Shows initiative, originality and is a rapid reader.
7. Loves new approaches to school work.

This is a very simple check list and may be suitable only for spotting a bright child. However, the gifted do maintain the above characteristics if their learning experience is an enriching one. A more negative set of characteristics will arise if the gifted child's learning experience is not an enriching one. A more comprehensive checklist for identification of the gifted is shown over. It covers all important characteristics of the gifted child. We may note once more that the child's ability to create is again at the top of the list.

Check List for the Identification of Gifted Children

The gifted child:-

- 1) creates and invents beyond the parameters of knowledge in the field;
- 2) explores wide-ranging and special interests not usually associated with children of his age; relates well with peers and adults who have similar interests;
- 3) employs a high intellectual and creative skill in assessing his or her physical or social environments, in solving problems, and in creating products;
- 4) demonstrates richness of imagery in informal language and brainstorming;
- 5) generates many ideas and multi-solutions to problems;
- 6) copes with environmental situations in resourceful and creative ways;
- 7) expends much energy and time in pursuing special interest; may be involved in numerous projects and activities;
- 8) becomes excited about new ideas but often without carrying them through;
- 9) has ability to improvise with common-place materials;
- 10) has high expectations of self and others which often lead to high levels of frustration with self, others, and situations.

Source: Clifford Stallings, quoted in Guidelines: Kentucky Programs for the Gifted/Talented (Kentucky: Kentucky Department of Education, Bureau of Instruction, 1978), p.22.

Identification of the gifted and study of characteristics may be carried out through many channels, viz:-

1. Observation of progresses used in learning in any content area, in or out of the classroom.
2. Observation of performance or products from any content or problem solving encounter.
3. Results of a wide array of psychometric instruments including tests of intelligence, achievement and creativity.
4. Self-report and reporting from others such as parents, teachers and peers. ⁽⁹⁾

"Whatever techniques for identification are used, we should realise that it is not a single, once and for all assessment"⁽¹⁰⁾ There are drop outs and misdiagnosed. Some problems in recognising giftedness include poor background, linguistic or other handicaps.

De Haan and Havighurst suggest that the most frequently missed children are;

1. Those of low occupation, status or from deprived minorities eg negroes.
2. Children in rural areas.
3. Girls ⁽¹¹⁾

I feel certain that a high intelligence quotient is a key factor in determining whether a child is or is not gifted. However, there are skills that are deserving of the term "gifted" that may not get just recognition. We can be gifted in different ways and while it is generally accepted that an I.Q. of 130 or over is the criterion for the identification of a gifted child, we cannot overlook giftedness in sports, music and the arts just because they may be more difficult to analyse.

CHAPTER ONE: FOOTNOTES

- (1) Walter B. Barbe and Joseph S. Renzulli, Eds.,
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- (2) Her Majestys Inspectorate, The Education of Very Able Children, (London:HMSO,: March 1992).
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- (4) R. Povey Ed., Educating the Gifted Child, (London:
Harper and Row, 1980), p. 24.
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Psychology and Education of the gifted, p. 56.
- (6) Povey, Educating the Gifted Child, p. 26.
- (7) Barbe and Renzulli, p.58.
- (8) Clifford Stallings, quoted in Guidelines: Kentucky Programs for the Gifted/Talented (Kentucky: Department of Education, Bureau of Instruction 1978), p. 22.
- (9) Barbara Clarke, Growing up Gifted, 2nd Ed. (Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1983), p. 7.
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- (11) Ibid.

CHAPTER 2. THE CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF GIFTED CHILDREN

Laycock argues that

"A gifted child is often not understood, his needs for emotional security, independence and a sense of worth may be frustrated even more than those of the handicapped child".⁽¹⁾

In our distrust of those who are different we have tended to neglect the gifted child and teachers and even parents have felt threatened by him/her to the point where Laycock believes that gifted children are often rejected.

"The characteristics most readily identifiable in gifted children, varying both in kind and degree in sensitivity."⁽²⁾

It is the sensitivity of gifted children that needs to be nurtured when they first come into contact with their peers in primary school. The child will be aware that it is different to its peers, so help is needed both emotionally and physically. Bullying is a common affliction of the gifted and is detrimental to their socialization. Stephen from Dublin West is aged 7. He is very gifted and as his father recalls, due to Stephen's inability to socialize with his chronological peers -

A lady used to walk around the school yard with him at breaktime holding his hand, all the time, to stop him being bullied.⁽³⁾

As a result of these threats Stephen knew that he was different. He would come home from school and ask:

"Why am I not like the everyone else?"⁽⁴⁾

His father debates whether he would be better off not trying to keep his intellect up to a higher level and whether his needs would be better met by letting him "Drift down to be more normal" ⁽⁵⁾

Sometimes children themselves can become aware of their needs to socialise and adjust themselves down to the level of their chronological peers.

The gifted child can learn so quickly that they often conceal their ability in order to fit in with the normal environment. These strategies of deception, lead to enormous difficulties.⁽⁶⁾

For example Freda Painter remembers

One incident when her daughter was at a friend's house and was invited to play the piano in front of her friend's music teacher. She played badly on purpose so as not to show her friend in a bad light.⁽⁷⁾

This natural reaction to the handicap of brilliance is reiterated by Bridges (1969) when he argues that the gifted child may:

play down his capabilities and conform to these standards in order to avoid the danger of becoming isolated from his friends.⁽⁸⁾

Social acceptance is a major reason for the underachievement of gifted children. This fundamental need to achieve can be satisfied by integrating children with their intellectual peers for at least a portion of their extra curricular activities.

Gifted children can become disruptive if their educational needs are not catered for. Gareth age 11 from North Co. Dublin has won a scholarship to the College of Music. He has just received marks of 130/150 in his first exam.

However, in school he was described as a nuisance by his teacher. His mother recalls how he came home from school one day saying that he had been put in the cupboard by the teacher for his bad behaviour. Gareth used to cry at night because he did not want to go to school. The problem was he was not being stimulated enough.

Another student who experienced behaviour difficulties is Andrew Farrell aged 17, he recalls how he does not remember "Learning how to read". In school he would read his new maths book on the first day and understand it. From then on he was bored and disruptive and openly admits to annoying people. This disruption led to him being asked to

leave the school. He feels the system did not suit him. Andrew attended the Johns Hopkins University in Washington D.C. and that experience changed his life for the better. Had this action not been taken, he feels he would have been lost. Andrew was lucky because he had the support of parents who believed in his ability.

Many of the most valuable learning experiences are those which are informal, in every day situations which involve parents and children simply talking and having a good time together. There is nothing more damaging to a gifted child's confidence than to be told to stop asking questions or to be given an abrupt answer. Above all, the gifted child, like any other, needs to be listened to and treated with understanding, a huge amount of teaching can be done in everyday life.

However, it is important not to forget about the stress and pressures on the families of gifted children. The following list outlines some of the characteristics they may come across;

1. Gifted Children tend to need less sleep than the average baby.
2. Comparison of sibling may be distorted whereby parents find bright children dull in comparison to their gifted child.
3. Stress may be put on parents having to cope with a child with more intelligence than themselves ⁽⁹⁾.

A child's giftedness could be easily overlooked in the educational system and he may go on to use his talents in a negative and destructive way. Therefore it is apparent that the parents role in the upbringing of the gifted child is crucial.

There follows an interview with Valerie Jelley - herself a mother of two gifted children (now grown up). She is a founder member of the Irish Association for Gifted Children and of the Explorers Club enrichment classes.

An interview with Valerie Jelley - Saturday, 9th January, 1993.

Q. How would you define the term gifted?

Gifted children are those who learn the first time they have heard something.

Q. How important is creativity in the development of gifted children?

Gifted children, when they are born can be gifted in any direction but it is their environment that decides on their direction. It depends on who inspires them. It is hard to be a great painter at 6 because children of this age lack dexterity. At 6 a gifted child will not have read enough to become a great poet. That is why many find maths as a safe and secure subject to get involved with. Their creativity may be held back by their emotional immaturity.

Q. What are the characteristics of gifted children that you found in your experience?.

In the first few days of life they lift their head. They can follow a moving object around the room with their eyes. They reach the first milestone before others. They have good concentration when motivated. They teach themselves to read. They have unusual hobbies and interests and go into great detail to study them. They hate repetition. They can be very disruptive when bored. They have varied sleep needs - some need only 2 hours out of 24.

Q. What would you consider to be the most important needs of the gifted (a) educationally? (b) emotionally (c) socially?

- a) They need to be challenged and to have a challenging curriculum.
- b) They need support and understanding.
- c) They need to meet other children like themselves to feel normal without hindrance. Their peers are those with the same mental age as themselves.

Q. Which of the 3 types of provision devised for the gifted students do you consider to be most effective?

- a) Segregation b) Enrichment c) Acceleration

They all have their advantages and are worth considering. However, it depends on the school, the teacher and the child.

Q. How do you feel about the gifted child's position in our Educational System in Ireland?

The Department of Education admits that they do nothing for the gifted. A big problem is the identification of the gifted. Teachers are the worst at diagnosing giftedness as has been statistically found by the World Council for the Gifted.

Q. What should we do?

If the gifted were recognised and acknowledged then everything else would follow in the same way as it has for the slow learners and mentally handicapped.

Q. What is your view on the need to provide for children who have exceptional talent in the creative arts?

A lot is done for those gifted in Music and Dance. The College of Music gives scholarships from an early age. These are done outside of school time. The visual arts and literature are neglected.

Q. Tell me about the Society for Gifted Children?

It is an association for gifted to help parents, teachers and other professions who come in contact with gifted children. They organise parents' evenings with speakers and residential holidays for the children. They receive no government money, it is completely voluntary, they represent the gifted.

Q. What is the Explorers Club? What does it aim to do? What is its objective?.

It was started 12 years ago in conjunction with the VEC in Bray. It is now in Marino also and I give 3 sessions a week. It is an enrichment activity for

gifted children aged between 6 and 12 years.

It aims to help the children's socialization skills, to meet their mental peer group.

Its objective is to show them that learning can be fun.

Q. What type of children/parents come to you and what are their reasons?

They come from all walks of life - they are not all middle class. Some are referred by the child guidance counsellor and some by psychologists. They are recognised usually by parents, grandparents, teachers, neighbours or people who recognise the gifted.

Their reason for coming is usually concern. They may be causing trouble in school or getting bullied and parents need help in approaching the school. If the gifted go wrong they go very wrong.

It is apparent that the needs of the gifted are very special and run on the opposite scale yet are strikingly similar to those of the slow learner, as pointed out by Laycock at the beginning of this chapter. We can derive the following needs which need most attention having looked at the special cases of gifted children in this chapter. The child may be

- (1) emotionally unbalanced, it will be aware it is different to its peers so help is needed both emotionally and physically because it is different.
- (2) The talent must not be hidden due to boredom.
- (3) The child may drop out because it feels bored.
This is an emotional need - the care givers and teachers may make up the imbalance.
- (4) Finally gifted children as Dunlap has so aptly stressed are "First of all children". As such they share with other children needs for love, security, acceptance, appreciation and other basic support which fosters the effective development of all children.

CHAPTER TWO: FOOTNOTES

- (1) John Dwortzky, Psychology, 2nd ed.,
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- (2) Barbara Clarke, Growing up gifted, 2nd.
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- (3) "Is your child very able". Written and produced by
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- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Jennifer Selway, "Small Wonders", Womans Journal
December 1992, p.p. 28-31.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) R. Povey, Ed. Educating the Gifted Child
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- (9) Ibid, p. 71.

CHAPTER 3

SEGREGATION, ACCELERATION AND ENRICHMENT.

How can we improve the education system for our gifted children?.

It is very important that the teacher is aware and has an understanding of a gifted child. Educators and administrators are still debating such issues as "enriched programmes", acceleration; skipping of grades and other modifications of the curriculum. At one extreme are those who would base promotions on the students' chronological age without regard to mental ability and at the other are those whose opinion is that the gifted child should be in a class corresponding to his mental age.

An alternative is to provide special classes with an enriched curriculum - such classes have been established in the U.S.A. with good results. It has been introduced as a teaching procedure rather than as an administrative device and it avoids most of the controversial aspects of either acceleration or special grouping. Enrichment may be defined as the provision of some form of additional educational experience which supplements the regular classroom activities or to quote Worcester (1956)

Enrichment is providing experiences for which the average or below average child lacks the time, the interest, or the ability to understand⁽¹⁾.

If a policy of enrichment is to be successfully implemented it is necessary to put very careful organisation in to the type of instruction to be used. Advocates of the enrichment approach usually insist that it consists of horizontal rather than vertical extension and that the aim is not to advance the gifted child to a high level on the educational ladder, but to give him a deeper knowledge, at the same level as that of the average child his age. The general principles of enrichment discussed by Havighurst et al are:

1. There should be emphasis on operative and experimental activities.
2. Emphasis on developing skills of investigating and learning.
3. Independent work, involving initiative and original.
4. High standards of accomplishment.
5. Opportunities for leadership and social adjustment.
6. Individual attention from a teacher.
7. First hand experiences.
8. Flexibility of organisation and procedure.
9. Extensive reading.
10. Concern with community responsibility.⁽²⁾

Enrichment activities should be seen not only as a means for gathering factual information but rather as a means for aiming at the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy "Comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation"⁽³⁾

An aspect of enrichment which makes it preferable to acceleration seems to consist of the child being encouraged to study an area which is not on the usual curriculum, and in this way provide more stimulating activities which compensate for the boredom and frustration of having to do most of his work at the same level as that of his chronological peers.

Conventionally, acceleration implies that a child with a superior ability is promoted to higher grades and is also called grade skipping. This may be the most economical means to make provision for the gifted. Teachers tend to disapprove of this procedure and often object that the bright student is not sufficiently mature physically or socially to work along with others older than themselves.

However schools tend to be universally much less hesitant about retaining backward students one or more grades. In Vol. IV of Terman's studies of gifted children (1947), findings showed that students who had been accelerated (in 1920's when it was more commonly allowed) not only fully maintained their academic position and achieved better than their older school mates but showed no more social or emotional maladjustment than occurs among non-accelerated bright students. Worcester (1956) claims to have found that high I.Q. children kept back with their chronological peers are less well adjusted than those accelerated.

The third provision provided for dealing with gifted children is segregation. This involves the separating of very able students from their chronological peers and providing selective schools for part or all of their students schooling. The segregation of students for individual activities on a part-time basis is not usually perceived to be a problem socially or academically for the teacher or the gifted child. However, certain problems can and do occur when a child is sent to a selective school. The major complaint is that selective schooling promotes snobbery and elitism. These selective schools are more common in the U.S.A. and Canada. "An Irish student Brian Cullen, 14 of Sandyford, Dublin attended an advanced class run at Notre Dame school in Newmarket, North of Toronto, after running into problems in his previous school" ⁽⁴⁾. However, his mother Marion Cullen was not impressed by the course, particularly because it took on an elitist element - she recalls how "they get the idea that they are better than the other children and become obnoxious little brats"

She recalls how on one occasion "Brian was beaten up in the playground because he wasn't wearing a polosshirt."⁽⁵⁾

The students had their own social uniform and enforced their own fashion code. Brian is much happier now with the education he is receiving at the Catholic University School in Dublin.

In January 1993 he will sit an exam to attend the Irish Centre for Talented Youth's Summer School which starts Summer 1993.

This course is one of the first attempts to provide education for gifted children in this country. The course will run for 3 weeks, with 150-200 children being lectured in one of six subjects - literature and writing, psychology, bio-technology, mathematical modelling, archaeology or computer science. (The curriculum does make provision for students who may have exceptional ability in the literary arts. However, it is an academic course and no provision is made for the performing or visual arts).

The course is based on one which has been taught at the John Hopkins University in Baltimore in the U.S.A. since 1972. It plans to admit children from all secondary levels, but is beginning with the first grade age 12 and 13. The centre has five long term goals as stated by Helen Kenny - director of the course, which includes:

Finding and educating academically gifted children, providing teacher training and support services to Irish schools to help them deal with these children and assisting parents by providing access to educational information and resources.⁽⁶⁾

It is very satisfying to see a course available to gifted children in this country and as it is only a summer school it should avoid the problem of elitism. For too long students over 12 years of age who are academically gifted have had no extra curricular activities open to them. Enrichment classes are available to gifted children who are between 6 and 12 years of age, these classes are called "The Explorers Club" and based in Marino and Bray VEC colleges. As looked at in the previous chapter it is usually the gifted children of concerned parents who attend these classes and it seems that only children of concerned parents will be able to afford to attend the Dublin City University Summer School. Therefore we can only assume that gifted children who do not have parental concern to assist them will get swallowed up in the educational system provided to them at present. This is very worrying when the natural bell-curve of I.Q. intelligence is studied. Gifted children from disadvantaged backgrounds or rural backgrounds are not receiving the educational stimulus they need and deserve. Giftedness in a disadvantaged area may emerge in a negative format whereby the gifted individual may turn his talents to crime. Surely it is cheaper to provide some assistance at a basic level such as primary or secondary schooling instead of spending more money should the individual end up in prison.

Any waste of potential is a matter for concern. It leads to a lack of individual self fulfilment and it is detrimental to the country's future well being.⁽⁷⁾

We cannot continue to ignore the need to make some provision for gifted children in this country.

A report from H.M.I. March 1992 suggests some ways of improving the education system for very able pupils. Some of the schools involved in devising a policy for very able children appointed a specific member of staff to co-ordinate procedures. Functions included:

1. Identification of very able pupils.
2. Provision of checklists and advice on assessment and recognition in subject areas.
3. The co-ordination of appropriate resources.
4. Administration related to enrichment courses provided by the L.E.A.
5. The organisation of in-service training activities.
6. Links with relevant outside agencies and with the local community.⁽⁸⁾.

Ideally it was hoped to achieve all of the above but in some cases teachers had been left to interpret their responsibilities in their own way. In terms of the general organisation of the mainstream curriculum the schools visited did not differ significantly from the national picture. However, the report is a step in the right direction and if we intend to improve the education of very able/gifted children in this country the Department of Education must lay out a set of aims, objectives and a suggested curriculum for teachers and pupils to follow.

Improvements will not happen if the only response is from the highest level down to the school room. A mutual understanding and genuine desire to improve the situation for gifted children will have to be agreed upon on all levels if we are going to see any positive change.

CHAPTER 3: FOOTNOTES

- (1) Vernon, Adamson and Vernon, The Psychology and Education of the Gifted Child. (London: Methuen, 1977), p. 172.
- (2) Ibid., p. 180
- (3) Ibid., p. 181
- (4) Sunday Business Post, Jan 10th 1993, p. 23
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) HMI, Report on The Education of Very Able Children in Maintained Schools, (HMSO: March 1992), p. 28.
- (8) Ibid., p. 12.

CHAPTER 4

CREATIVITY: THE HIGHEST EXPRESSION OF GIFTEDNESS.

Possibly the most unexplained aspect of creativity lies in the fact, that even though few can agree on a definition, when we use the word, every one senses a similar feeling. Over the years scholars, artists, musicians, and scientists among others have used it to communicate this amazing phenomenon. Creative people share ways of thinking and feeling and have similar attitudes that seem to transcend the discipline in which they are working. Some qualities of mature creative people include:

- 1) Openness and flexibility
- 2) Enjoyment of discovery
- 3) A capacity to reconcile opposites with himself or herself (the masculine and feminine side to each other).

It is possible to define the creative individual as one made up of many contradictions yet it is their ability to formulate these differences that sets them aside from the non-creative individual. Barron seems to sum up the nature of the creative person in remarking that he is "both more primitive and more cultured, more constructive and more destructive, crazier and saner than the average person."⁽¹⁾

To suggest that all creative individuals are the same would be naive. Creativity is structured under a wider umbrella

which takes in several different concepts. There are many ways to approach the concept of creativity. At least one researcher Brewster Ghiselin argues for 2 levels of creativity.

1. Higher Level of Creativity

The creation of an object for the first time, the act must be entirely original. A unique contribution to the arts, sciences, philosophy or some other area.

2. Lower Level of Creativity

Creativity at this level casts a new light on something already in existence. It improves, alters or reproduces something. The creation of products of the mind which are novel in that they lie outside individual's past experience."⁽²⁾

Another interesting concept on two levels is that put forward by De Haan and Havighurst who classify creativity in relation to human behaviour and specific disciplines.

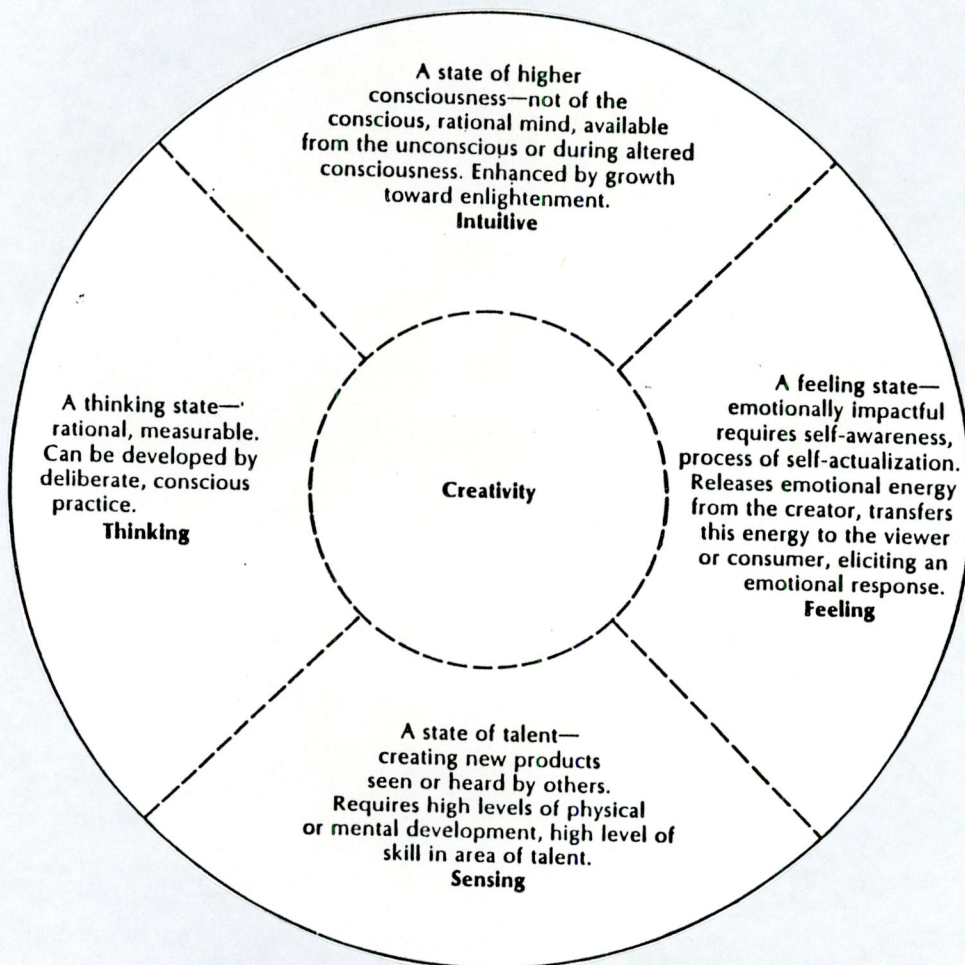
1. Affective Creativity: That which relates to others fundamental to the arts.

2. Problem Solving Creativeness: More practical in nature/associated with technological subjects and preference for ideas and concepts rather than people.⁽³⁾

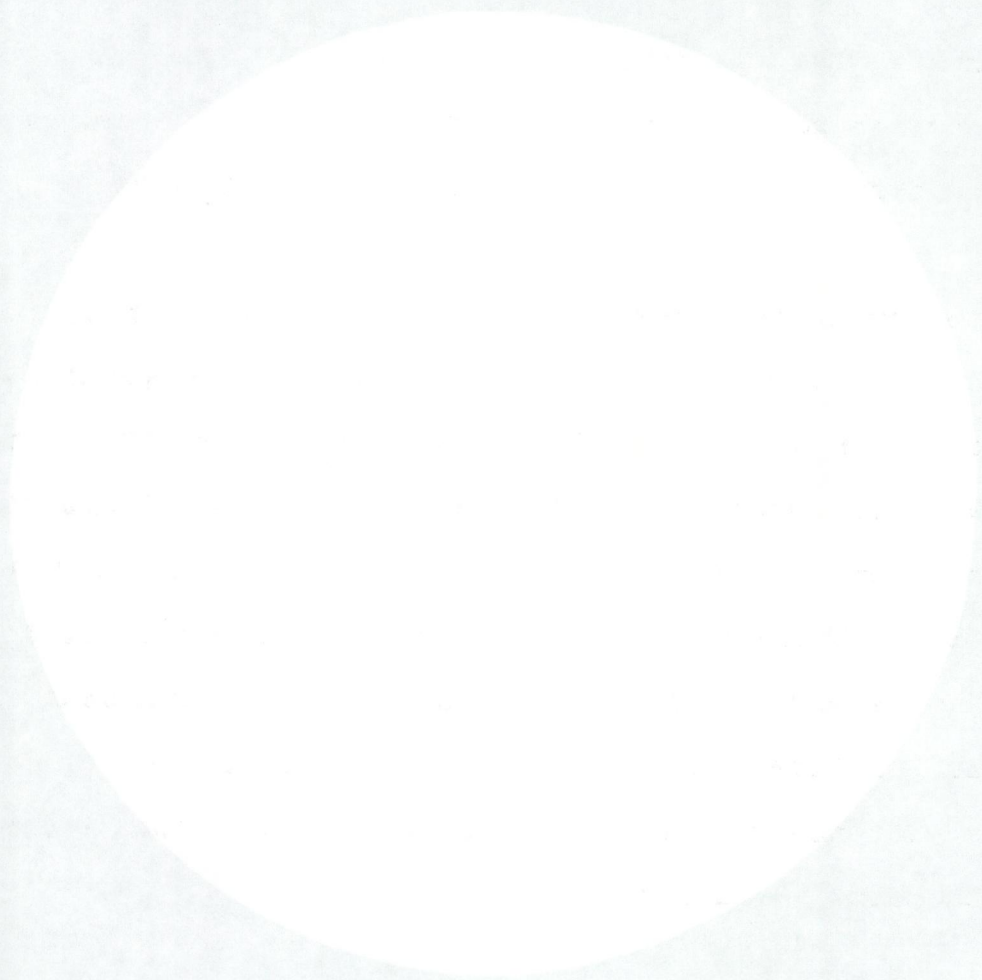
However this concept separates the artist from the scientist and discredits the view that a similar process of realization is taken by all creative individuals. In the construction of a creativity circle the basic functions of

thinking, feeling, sensing the intuiting work together to release creativity. The basis of this concept working relies on the equal prominence of all four functions, restrict any one function and you restrict creativity.

See Fig. 4.1



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When viewed from this basis, instead of describing different types of creativity, all of these perceptions may only be fragments of the total concept, creativity includes all of the functions suggested in the creativity circle. With only one function operating alone a person cannot create. Renzulli's definition of giftedness used in Chapter One seems to aid us now in our concept of creativity. As giftedness is a result of total integrated functioning of ability and commitment, creativity is therefore the highest expression of giftedness.

The criterion for selecting and evaluating creative students from the view of creativity is sometimes a high score on a test of creative thinking, (TTCT) (Torrance 1962) Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (Torrance 1966) and Remote Associates Test (RAT) (Medrick and Medrick 1967). These tests are however unreliable and restrict the very essence of creativity due to the constraints induced such as time and content. "Short and closely timed tests do violence to the very essence of the creative process", according to Barron.⁽⁵⁾

Teachers, counsellors and administrators should recognise that highly creative adolescents may exhibit vastly different personalities in school and in the rest of their world.⁽⁶⁾

As found with the gifted adolescent their surroundings in school are somewhat limiting for their special needs and furthermore the difficulties may be somewhat more serious for boys as shown in a study with creative adolescents by Halpin, Payne and Ellett:

Females

- * Liked school, course in sciences, music and art
- * Like their teachers
- * Read new magazines and other non-required reading and special reports
- * Were active in dramatics & musical productions
- * Did not go out on dates as often
- * Were daydreamers

Males

- * Disliked school
- * Disliked their teachers
- * Did little homework
- * Disliked physical education
- * Were regarded as radical or unconventional
- * Often wanted to be alone to pursue their own thoughts and interests⁽⁷⁾

It is of great importance that we consider the educational needs of the gifted and creative individuals if we intend to improve their quality of education. As outlined in Chapter 3 the needs of the artistically gifted students are not catered for in any of the current provisions being made for gifted children in Ireland. Indeed the situation for all artistic students at secondary level was grim until recently. The Curriculum and Examinations Board proposed some positive and realistic changes which were published in the Discussion Paper of September 1985. The paper outlined problems which needed immediate attention and it was due to this paper that the Junior Certificate Syllabus in Art, Craft and Design was implemented in 1992. The proposals suggested in the paper go a long way to improving the situation for our artistically gifted students in secondary school.

Identification of artistically gifted students varies somewhat, however procedures for identification are usually as follows:

1. Self-nomination
2. Portfolio review
3. Interview

4. Creativity tests
5. Teacher nomination
6. Peer nomination

It is usually relatively easy for a teacher to identify the artistically gifted student through their art products. An art product evaluation form aids the teacher in their selection of a talented student. Another very obvious process in identification is study of the students behaviour checklist for identification of visually/artistically talented students.

Artistically gifted students, according to this list are:

1. More apt to respond to adult role models and artistic peers.
2. Possess a well developed visual memory.
3. Possess a high curiosity level that stimulates active imagination.
4. Is more apt to respond to environmental observations and changes.
5. Is capable of original thinking.
6. Has the ability to generalize.
7. Examines problems artistically.
8. Is able to concentrate for long periods of time.
9. Seeks challenging experiences that are goal-oriented.
10. Engages in compulsive pursuit of special interests.
11. Imposes self-criticism that interferes with satisfaction.⁽⁸⁾

Artistically gifted students will usually display some if not all of the above characteristics. A common misconception in Western Society is to assume that the artistically gifted child is a loner or social misfit. "Research has shown that generally, gifted and talented students are social and intellectual leaders and emotionally well-adjusted".⁽⁹⁾

FIGURE
4.2

ART PRODUCT EVALUATION FORM

Name of Student _____		Grade _____					
School _____		Teacher _____					
Evaluate the student's talent as evidenced in art work on the following scale of 0-5 according to the following criteria. Note that a rating of 5 indicates unique, mature ability and should be used with reservation.							
		Not evident	Emerging	Average	Competent	Outstanding	Unique
1.	Skillful composition	0	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Originality of ideas	0	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Complexity and detail	0	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Sensitive use of line	0	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Sensitive use of color	0	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Appropriate use of texture	0	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Purposeful use of shape	0	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Thoughtful use of space / perspective	0	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Effective use of media	0	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Expressiveness	0	1	2	3	4	5
Column total		—	—	—	—	—	—
Weight		0	1	2	3	4	5
Weight column total		—	—	—	—	—	—
OVERALL TOTAL		_____					

Additional comments: _____

Adapted from: "Evaluation Form for Art Applications," Indianapolis Public Schools, School of Performing Arts. "Instructions for Scoring the Drawing Test, Form E," *Art Enrichment: How to Implement a Museum/School Program*. Austin, Tx: The University of Texas at Austin, 1980. "Creative Products Scale—Art," Detroit Public Schools, 1981.

From *School Arts* (November 1983), used by permission.

Another misunderstanding is that talented artistic students need no instruction or that instruction in the arts is harmful. A further misconception is that

"Education programs for artistically talented students need not be planned and that a supply of available art materials is all that is required to meet the needs of talented students."⁽¹⁰⁾

Talent in the arts must be encouraged, exercised and practised in order to flourish. Curricula for intellectually gifted students often stress advanced conceptions and sophisticated ideas.

"Learning in the visual arts for students who are artistically talented, also requires curricula that stress advanced understanding, knowledge and skills, about the visual arts."⁽¹¹⁾

Art teachers and art curriculum designers have proposed many ways of accommodating the artistically gifted. However, with the restrictions of mixed ability, which most secondary level art teachers work under, it is important to point out that "one does not gain any insight into the democratic process by pretending that all youngsters are capable of equal levels of artistic or other achievement".⁽¹²⁾ Therefore in order for a curriculum to be successful the curriculum designer must provide in class enrichment activities which will enable the gifted student to produce a more sophisticated piece of work.

The subject matter of an art curriculum must be prepared in such a way as to develop rather than stifle the students creativity. And such a subject matter is covered in the new revised Junior Certificate syllabus and it is recommended that the implementation of an equally exhilarating Senior Cycle course be speedily introduced to the Art Curriculum in our Secondary schools.

"This will increase respect for art in schools and student satisfaction level as achieved with the Junior Certificate. Furthermore the high achievers in academic subject area are very often discouraged from following a visual arts course at Leaving Certificate Level and are directed towards other areas of the curriculum"⁽¹³⁾

and a more exciting senior cycle will encourage those gifted individuals who have a choice of subjects to choose art.

What can the art teacher do at present to enrich the curriculum of artistically talented students?

As outlined in the Junior Certificate syllabus an indepth training in visual awareness of Art Craft and Design through the art elements, art history and exploration of art processes is needed in an art curriculum. It is suggested that the Senior Cycle will be an extension of this. Therefore I suggest that an enriched curriculum should provide the artistically gifted student with an ability to develop their innate abilities through the set curriculum, with the addition of teacher guidance to help the student achieve a more sophisticated level of art.

The Indiana University in the U.S.A. has been catering for the artistically gifted, using a very sophisticated approach, as is evident from Fig 4.3 and Fig. 4.4 (see over).

It is up to the individual art teachers in schools in this country to develop the potential of artistically gifted students using the resources available to them to achieve the best results possible for themselves and their students. An enriched curriculum is evidently the best way of providing this.



In this studio scene, a teacher from the Interlochen Center for the Arts has provided a challenging problem and appropriate media and tools for the instructional activity. The student is using techniques and methods of an adult sculptor. Photo by Brill.

FIG. 4-3



This pen and ink drawing, by a college freshman, shows a vast knowledge and understanding of the work of Dürer, a 16th Century artist. In this sophisticated drawing, the student has created a novel self-portrait done in the style of a great master. Mastery of the use of line, shapes, perspective, value contrast, and detail, as well as symbols come together in a unified and impressive composition. Photo by Indiana University AV Services.

FIG. 4.4

CHAPTER FOUR: FOOTNOTES

- (1) Barron "The Needs for Order and for Disorder as Motives in Creative Activity"; in Scientific Creativity: its Recognition and Development, eds., C.W. Taylor and Frank Barron (New York: John Wiley 1963), p.159.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) De Haan and Havighurst, Educating Gifted Children, (Chicago, 1961), p. 113
- (4) Barbara Clarke, Growing Up Gifted (Ohio: Charles Merrill 1983), p. 31.
- (5) Frank Barron Creative Person and Creative process. (New York, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p. 37.
- (6) Paul Torrance, Guidance Creative Talent, (Huntington; New York: 1976), p. 71.
- (7) Clarke, Growing up Gifted, p. 36.
- (8) Zimmerman Educating Artistically Talented Students, (A.R.T.S., New York, 1984), p. 49.
- (9) Ibid., p. 14.
- (10) Ibid., p. 15.
- (11) Ibid., p. 133.
- (12) Feldman, Becoming Human Through Art: Aesthetic Experience in the School, (Englewood, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970), p. 53.

CONCLUSION

Having dealt with so many definitions of the gifted we can assume that all have their merits, however, for the assistance of the secondary teacher we can take it that all students of high ability academically or in the sciences or arts are gifted. Every school of mixed ability should have at least 2% very able students and the likelihood is that our schools have more from the top end of the natural curve scale rather than the lower.

First there is a need to identify gifted children in our schools if their needs are to be catered for. Educators must recognise their special needs once the gifted have been identified. They need to be socially and intellectually accepted. They need to be loved by family, peers and teachers. Educationally they need a stimulating curriculum that will increase rather than stunt their growth.

On a personal level I asked myself what could I do to advance the cause of gifted children. In my classroom I will introduce extra enrichment classes after school for the artistically talented students. This will satisfy their special needs and will improve the overall moral and standard of all students work on a day to day level.

I have started the process of identifying gifted students who take art as a subject by assessing their characteristics and behaviour. For example, one student, Ian performed highly on the Drumcondra entrance exam having attained sixth place out of 150 students in 1st year. Now he is labelled a problem student by many teachers. His art work has stayed exceptional and he shows great intellectual and problem solving ability in art class. But in some other classes he spends his time drawing caricatures of the

teachers with excellent likeness. Because art is the only subject he responds to, at the year head meeting he was put in my special care and he has to report on his progress to me each week. In discussion with the guidance counsellor concerning Ian she acknowledged now that he most probably is gifted and is referring him for psychological testing.

The guidance counsellor herself has a gifted son - this we discovered through our discussions concerning Ian. The counsellor's son is now happily attending the Explorers Club and finding it an enriching experience. He had been very frustrated with his chronological peers and now his mother is delighted with his improved behaviour.

I have since approached the Principal asking him to promote teachers to be aware of gifted children in their classes. I was met with favourable response and being concerned with equality of opportunity for all students in the school he agrees on the need to start a programme of enrichment for students. Four teachers of different disciplines including myself will be working on this pilot scheme.

It is my aim that the research carried out in this dissertation will come to fruition when I put it to practical use in my teaching career.

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