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**Review Article** 

# A Historical and an Educational Analysis to Decode the Gifted Individual Type Intended to Educate in the Ottoman Empire by Searching the Process of Mimar Sinan's Education

**ABSTRACT**: This study accentuates that each society has its own unique and gifted ideal type to rise. And also it will be focused on that those special terms of the society determine the characteristics of that ideal type. In order to get the point, educational experiences in the Ottoman period will be inspected attentively. By using different sources, it will be elaborated further that the Ottoman society composed an elective education not an elitist education. In the Ottoman elective education system, individuals were elected according to their abilities from Acemi Oğlanlar Quarry (Candidate Janissaries) to Enderun School. This elective education system might be a model for the present. Especially it will be investigated how Sinan bin Abdulmennan was discovered and how he became one of the greatest figures in the architectural area. The main purpose of this study is to search historical origins of the Ottoman gifted education system thoroughly if there was any application to adapt for the gifted education in the present.

Key words: ideal individual type, novice janissary quarry, Enderun, Mimar Sinan, Ottoman Empire, giftedness.

İbrahim GÜLER,

PhD Student, Ege University, Literature Faculty, Department of History of Turkish Republic, Izmir, Turkey.

Founder, Private Yedi Renkli Çınar Okulları, Bursa, Turkey. iguler@yedirenklicinar. k12.tr

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#### INTRODUCTION

Every single society wants to educate its own individual type. The features of this desired person to be educated are filtered from intellectual, economical, political, cultural and geographical conditions of the time. For instance the question of "what are features of an ideal student?" is directed to an American teacher, he/she describes the ideal student as following instructions, silent and asking any question. When same question is directed to a Finn teacher, he/she describes the ideal student as honest, broadened horizon, self-respected, friendly. A Nigerian teacher describes the features of the ideal student as openhearted, trusted, self-confident, healthy, respectfully and sociably (Besançon, 2013). This example is remarkable in terms of each ideal type of features are different each other. On the other hand while some characteristics of the ideal type are unchangeable and the other characteristics changeable. The period of human are conditions, perception, natural historical experiences and technological developments have an effect upon the characteristics of the ideal type. If a society cannot interpreted its ideal type wisely according to the zeitgeist, foreign ideal types from the other societies are imported. These imported types put leverage on the present type closed to new comments. Then the present type cannot stand and kneels down before imported types. As a consequence of that the present ideal type becomes open to be changed for all features although some features must not be open to change. Because these unchangeable features are the main characteristics of the ideal type. This story became true for the Ottoman ideal type after the Industrial Revolution. Therefore conditions that the time brought could not be adapted wisely and the present ideal type could not updated himself timely (Karpat, 2002). It can applied to the approach of Ibn Haldun's organic state to understand the position of the Ottoman ideal type after the Industrial Revolution. According to Ibn Haldun a state is born, expands and fails in five stages. Victory/war is the first stage. Placing the traditions of the Sultan is the second stage. The comfort is the third stage. The fourth stage is a period of contentment, satiation and complacency. The fifth stage is a wastage and disintegration period (İbn Haldun, 1989). In the fifth stage every society loses its own ideal type and this loss accelerates its decline. History is full of societies that lost their ideal type and then lost their vital culture. As a matter of fact if one

society cannot build its own educational system to discover its gifted and talented kids, it will have a great difficulty in understanding the spirit of time/zeitgeist.

Each state and society has to raise the representative desired type of person to keep its social life alive. The features of the desired type are not only determined by only one generation. Its features are infiltrated from the experiences of different generations. Such factors like historical experiences, climate, ways to eating, land forms, population movements affect the characteristics of the ideal type. History is full of such samples to figure out such factors (Braudel, 2001).

Because of time conditions and having a special geographical position, Ottoman State was able to gather Anatolian principalities around oneself. Ottoman State became successful to use Anatolian social heritage as a source for the desired person to be trained. This approach of the Ottoman society evolved Sinan into Koca (Great) Sinan by exploring his abilities. Not only architectural approach of his time but also later time was affected by the intellectual giftedness of Koca Sinan. Sinan became a memorable architectural figure by interpreting the heritage of Roman, Byzantium, Seljukid and Ottoman Empires.

If historical heritage can be interpreted without plucking from the context and falling into anachronism, Ottoman practices to discover the abilities may shed light on present gifted kid education.

## The Historical Development of Idealized Ottoman Human Type

The struggle between Sparta and Athen is one of the historical events to understand the formation of ideal human type in what conditions comes to appear. In the period of Lycurgus of Sparta the warrior with a heavy military discipline as an ideal human type was an accepted educational policy. Kids belonged to the state. The military system called agoge took healthy seven year old boys from the care of their mother to educate them under the heavy military discipline in 12 years. Spartan girls were also educated under the principles of courage, discipline and honor to become a mother giving birth to real warrior. The education system was planned to protect Sparta from the enemies. Because of that situation, the warrior human type was an ideal type to be reached. (Plutarch, 1988; Powell, 2001) Spartan State was established in a lowland place. There was no

castle defensive castle. Sparta was the only Greek city without defensive walls. So, the men had to become walls of Sparta. The Spartan rigorous education created its own walls from men. Maybe this situation was one of the most important factors to affect the characteristics of the ideal type (Kennell, 1995; Plutarch, 1914).

On the other hand in ancient Greece "paideia" was the system to educate the ideal type. Instead of military and rigid discipline in Sparta scientific discipline was the crucial point in this education. Athen type was interested in math, literature, music and philosophy. Bodily healthiness was significant to ensure the intellectual healthiness. This individual type distinguished with intellectual discipline was defeated by soldierly disciplined Spartan type during the Peloponnesian War between 431-404 BC (Quennel, 1962; Golden, 1998; Tekin, 2007; Mansel, 2004). However when this historical event is examined from different points, the beaten Athen type became a victorious type in a long period against the Spartan type. While the efficacy of the Spartan type was effective in a short period, the intellectual efficacy of Athen type is still effective in the present.

Alpine (brave, fearless) was an ideal type to be educated in Turkish tribes in the Middle Asian territories. According to Akyuz (2010) hard climatic conditions were decisive to shape the nomadic life style. Because of that reason, nomads were constantly on the move according to seasons. Additionally endless quarrelings and wars were efficient to increase these mobilities. These difficulties made heroism important to play a central role in the characteristics of alpian style (Çobanoğlu, 2003; Kaplan, 2004).

In Garipname of Asik Pasha (2000) nine characteristics of alpian type were explained. One of them was heroic one mentioned above. Asik Pasha these According to nine characteristics were necessarily for the alpian type: Heart with courage, to force the arm, having enthusiasm, having a good horse, suitable clothes, having a bow and sword, being bayoneted, be a companion. "Alp" was a nickname for the Turks meaning heroic and warrior before accepting Islam. This idealized type was also accepted by Turks as a heroic figure even after accepting Islam. Accordingly Asik Pasha, this idealised type was named "Gaziyan-i Rum" (Greek Veterans) even after conversion of the Turks to Islam. In some resources, the name of Alp-eren (Brave-mystic) was used too.

After the conversion of Turks to Islam some changes that appeared in the perspectives towards life caused to shift the paradigm of the Alpian style. Both Seljukid and Ottoman periods were the time for Alp-eren style. Therefore all education systems were shaped to educate this new ideal type.

### The Formation of Institutions to Shape the **Ottoman Ideal Type**

During the Seljukid period Turks almost changed their lifestyle from nomadic life to settled life. This transition affected whole life and caused to appear new requirements (Kafesoğlu, 1977). In the Seljukid period, the educational institutions aimed to educate "mystic/dervish human type". The sources breeding this type were the Islamic sources. The madrasah was the common institution to teach new ideal

type (Togan, 1981).



Figure 1. Miniature to Show the Nizamiye Madrasah in the Seljukids

Nizamiye Madrasah was an educational model that influenced the later time after Seljukids. This influential position of Nizamiye Madrasah was the result of the state supporting. The Madrasah became an irrevocable structure for the state because of new conquests. New conquests means the need of qualified person. Nizamiye Madrasah was the center for educating qualified people. Apart from these the madrasahs created a loyalty to the state by giving an informal education to public (Akyüz, 1989). Directly or indirectly state support to these madrasahs through the agency of waqfs showed an affirmative result in the political, economic and social areas. This scholarly atmosphere made the Seljukids as a decisive state in its time (Köymen, 1983). Especially Nizamiye Madrasah in Baghdad was the first application for the By educational campus. accommodating students, having a library, a hospital and social

activities it became a pioneer in its time. This mentality was applied by the Ottomans as "kulliye" (Complex of educational buildings adjacent to a mosque.) Therefore by serving all their needs students just focused on studying. (Aslanapa, 1963).

The libraries were open to public. Consequently social movement was not only horizontal but also vertical. This means that by educating himself an ordinary person could become a man in the ruling class. Seyfeddin Sungurca bin Abdullah was responsible for the library to lend books in Monday and Thursday (Temir, 1989). With this application training would be opened to all segments of society through the agency of madrasahs and libraries. In this way the intellectual map of the society was scanned attentively to reach the gifted and talented kids. Then those kids were accepted to madrasah for educating them. Such educative opportunities got rid of social discontents (Akyüz, 1989). In madrasah not only Islamic subjects were taught but also arithmetic, medical subjects, philosophy were taught. Thereby students had a chance to learn applied sciences. At that time in the big hospitals students studying medical subjects had a chance to see the medical applications. Also in the observatories students had learned astronomical instruments (Turan, 1969).

Being open some subjects to public and acknowledged argued by scholars some issues in the presence of the Sultan were a bench mark for the place of the science life during the Seljukid period (Çelebi, 1976). Especially social needs were identified by waqfs and madrasahs became the center to supply those needs scholarly. Madrasahs laid emphasis on educating public by using students who were sent to various parts of Anatolia in certain months. In the meantime they learned more about public and had a great opportunity to teach public. These meetings were very important to determine the public attitude positively towards madrasahs (Doğan, 1999).

Those students who took their education in the city during 3 holy months according to Hijri calendar (Recep, Saban, Ramazan) went to country sides for giving public some Islamic advices. This practice was called as "cer". They caught a chance to transfer their theoretical knowledge into practical one. During 3 months they collected various Islamic charities. After 3 months students returned to madrasah and with those charities they supplied their basic needs (Pakalin, 1983). This practice gave an opportunity to them for learning public customs closely (Cihan, 1999). Subjects learnt in madrasahs had constituted a common culture in all level of society at mosques and village chambers (Akgündüz, 2004).

The teaching system of madrasah pioneering educational institution of the current period was teacher-centered. Mudarris/professor was leading his field. His relations with the society were mostly based on the scientific concerns. He just concentrated on his scholarly research because he had no problem with his financial possibility. This made him high standing in the society (Akyüz, 1989). Each mudarris specified the details of his own curriculum. He selected his own pupils. He having his scientific autonomy and inviolability determined the philosophy of the madrasah according to scientific concerns. By using the same philosophy he selected his pupils from gifted and qualified men. The scientific level of pupils was significative to determine which book and which class they will read (Celebi, 1976). Board of visitors also had a voice to choose qualified pupils. This board was a kind of financial manager to keep the balance of incomes and outcomes of the madrasah (Konvalı, 1964; Kavaoğlu, 1978).

Nizamu-l Mulk the famous grand vizier of the Seljukids got organized a system to supply all needs of students without charge and to put them on a regular salary (Çelebi, 1976). Therefore they just focused on their studying. Those who did not focus on studying got kicked out the system. One requirement to have these opportunities was to just constantly busy in studying. It was an accepted reality that occupations in other fields get rid of desire to study (Kazıcı, 1991; Köymen, 1992). Even that accepted reality influenced on the architecture of madrasah. Usually in the Anatolian Seljukid Madrasas there was no window to Street in the room of students (Kazıcı, 1995).

Madrasas was the top level of education during the period of the Seljukids. Scientific heritages were transferred from the mudarris to students in these institutions. To choose enthusiastic, gifted and smart kids as a student was a crucial point to not break this tradition.

Institutes of informal education like mosques, wisdom house, bookstores, peace courses under auspices of the Sultan, trade guilds, infants' school had an indispensable position to reach common people. In these institutions gifted and genius kids were discovered and advised to upper educational institutions. In company with a teacher or a master chosen kid started to get education. With his ambition to work, patience and talents the student could take up important positions in the state (Celebi, 1976; Kazıcı, 1983).

After the decline of the Seljukids the period of Anatolian principalities had begun and authority gap appeared in Anatolia. Madrasah system was affected from that situation. This gap was filled by the Ottomans. By using the support of madrasas they easily became a state. By this way the Ottoman State not only inherited political and military heritages of the Seljukids but also inherited educational heritage.

While the Ottoman State was extending its borders by new conquests, it was urgently in need of qualified human sources. The best way to find needed human sources was to mobilize the power of madrasas among public. Those educated in the system of madrasa took a duty in different stages of the state. Particularly Sahn-1 Seman Madrasa in the period of Mehmet the Counqueror and Suleymaniye Madrasa in the period of Suleyman the Magnificient became the center for the qualified human sources.

On the other hand, the Ottoman State had to find new soldiers because of new conquests. According to Carsili (1984) the Seljukids used the prisoners of war to fulfill the need in the military field by using the pençik law. In the same manner also the Ottomans used the prisoners of war by using devshirme law. Especially by the advices of Çandarlı Halil and Molla Rüstem the non-muslim kids between 8 and 20 years old were gathered for training. These kids were given to a Muslim family to teach Turkish customs during 3 to 8 years. (Pakalın, 1983; Neşri, 1987).



Figure 2. Miniature to Show the Ottoman Devshirme System

The recruited kids had to have some qualities. At the first stage they were chosen with regard to their physical Outlook under the supervision of Janissary Agha. Being healthy, not an only child, not parentless, not married, not having an occupation, not too tall and too short, not bald were some of the physical features (İnalcık, 1994). Besides the family of the picked kids were exempted from taxes. In order to take advantage of this exemption the families were eager to give their child to be picked up (Özcan, 1994; Çarşılı, 1997).

The name of devshirme kids were written in the identity books. In these books there were information about the kid's family, date of birth, village, parents' name etc. After that they were distributed to Muslim families for being educated according to Turkish customs. (İlgürel, 1986; Uzunçarşılı, 1997) State officers sometimes had checked the kids. After the projected time the kids were brought to Istanbul and taken into Acemi Oglan Corp (İnalcık, 1994).

Some kids were taken away from others by Janissary Agha for the Palace. Those were educated in Edirne, Ibrahim Pasha and Galata Palace. Gifted and good-looker ones were taken to Topkapı Palace and included for Enderun School. The remainders were sent into Sultan's household troops. Able-bodied ones were accepted into Bostanci Corps (Özcan, 2005; Akkutay, 1984).

In the 16th century the Ottoman ideal type became alive in the character of Mimar Sinan. Mimar Sinan was brave and mystic. These two features were indispensable for the Ottoman type in the 16th century. Sinan served as a cavalry and the military architecture.

Can some practices of the Ottoman education to educate the ideal type be a model for the 21st century to discover the gifted kids. How did Sinan b. Abdulmennan recruited from his village become the chief architect of the palace? What kind of education system had discovered the skills of Sinan? In this article those mentioned questions we will try to answer under the light of historical events.

### Mimar Sinan: Brave and Mystic Individual Type Educated in the Ottoman System

Mimar Sinan was born in a small village called Ağırnas near the city of Kayseri in Anatolia. His birth date was 1489. He was the son of a stonemason and carpenter. Because of his father's job he developed a passion for constructing. The background of his attention towards constructional works based on this situation. He lived his childhood and first adolescent time in the period of Bayezid the Second who remained on the throne till 1512. Then he was conscripted into Ottoman service under the law of devshirme and sent to Istanbul in the period of Yavuz Sultan Selim. He lived his maturity time in the period of Süleyman the Magnificient (1520-1566), Selim the Second (1566-1574) and Murad the Third (1574-1595). When he passed away in 1588 he was 99 years old. According to Tazkirat-al Abniva dictated by Sinan to his friend Mustafa Sai Çelebi he left behind 476 buildings like mosques, collgeses, bridges, drainage systems, palaces, bath-houses, hospitals etc. Mimar Sinan became an architect pioneer not for his time but after his time and had a crucial impact on the architectural works. Another contemporary work about Sinan is Tezkiretu'l-Bunyan by Mustafa Sai Çelebi. We can reach reliable information about Mimar Sinan from these two biographical works (Cansever, 2005; Refik, 2012; Günay, 2005).



Figure 1. Mimar Sinan

After his conscription in 1512 the devshirme system, (Russell, 1990) Sinan b. Abdulmennan was enlisted for the army of Acemi Oğlanlar, Corps of Conscript Boys. Here he learned the basics of carpentry and construction technology. After the end of his basic training as a cadet he joined different in the Ottoman campaigns to Belgrade (1521), Rhodes (1522), Mohacs (1526), Vienna (1529), Iraq (1534), Moldovia (1538) as a cavalry man. During these campaigns he found a great opportunity to observe many different architectural structures. In addition to this, he was asked to build bridges and roads for the army. All of these were a great fortune for him to get some more experiences. (Sözen, 1975; Kuran, 1986).

Throughout all of these campaigns mentioned above he reached his majority and he was accepted as an able architect and engineering. Because of his eye-catching Works, The Grand Vizier Chelebi Lutfi Pasha appointed him as the chief officer of Architect of the Abode Felicity. From 1538 till his death in 1588 he served as the head of Architect of the Ottoman Empire. During his incumbency he designed and built many buildings, roads, waterworks, bridges, mosques, colleges etc. and trained many pupils. He was able to set the pace in the architectural style of his time. Mustafa Sai Chelebi put into words Sinan's story how to become a head of all architects of the Empire in Tezkiretu'l Ebniye a bioghraphy dictated by Sinan to him.

The talent is the grace of God By working hard I complete the grace I am indebted to my master Made me carpenter Methodically, with my art and my service I practiced since my childhood With my effort among my peers I grew in Haji Bektash House (Develi, 2003, pp.174).

According to verses mentioned above Mimar Sinan believed in that he had a flair for the architecture. He laid emphasis on the importance of the natural ability, a good master and a hard working. These were the factors to make Sinan Abdulmennas as the head of the Ottoman Architects (Kuban,2011).

In the devshirme system not only administrators were educated for the statecraft but also profession experts were educated for different occupational groups as be seen the example of Sinan (Russell, 1990). The military campaigns to Rhodes and Belgrade opened Sinan's eyes with the observations of Greek great architectural monuments. Before he was just a craftsman. But later he developed his skills by seeing new places and became a monumental figure in the architectural field (Refik, 2012). Lutfi Pasha wanted to build 3 galiots to pass the Lake Van from Sekban Sinan. After he completed this duty successfully, he became Subaşı a position in the Ottoman Army (Refik, 2012).



Figure 2. A Miniature to Show the Construction of Suleyman the Magnificient's Tomb by Sinan

By serving in the army from 1514 to 1539 without interruption he gained architectural experiences. After the building of a bridge on the Prut River in 13 days he grabbed the attention of Suleyman the Magnificient (Refik,



2012; Kazancığil, 1988). Other military campaigns to Iran, Egypt, Germany, Irak etc. Gave a chance to him to observe the architectural monument of other civilizations in their natural habitats (Çeçen, 1988; Özer, 1988).



Figure 3. An External and Interior View of Suleymaniye Mosque

16th century was accepted as the most powerful period of the Ottoman Empire in all fields (İnalcık, 1994). He became the chief architect in this period and he used this power to put Ottoman architecture over the top. On the other hand the Ottoman Palace and administrators left the architectural field clear for Sinan the Great Architect as how he wanted. This gave a great opportunity to him for the application of his architectural skills (Kuban, 2011; Cansever, 2005).



Figure 4. An External and Interior View of Selimiye Mosque

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#### CONCLUSION

The habits of the state administrators are affected from the conditions of their time. The ethics and habits are different in different time. As a matter of fact the moral is tied to the age conditions (İbn Haldun, 1989). Considering this fact each period creates its own moral conditions and educational system is mostly shaped by these conditions. Geographical, economic, political and spiritual circumstances of the age directly or indirectly have an impact upon the desired individual type to be educated (Braudel, 2001).

By understanding the conditions of the time each civilization creates its own habit maps. Reading these maps correctly the gifted kids can be easily discovered. The devshirme system was used for the qualified human sources. So, it was shaped as a kind of elimination system to find the gifted and talented kids (Russell, 1990).

In the devshirme system an eliminative approach from general abilities to special talents was implemented. In the Ottoman period the education was not elitist but eliminative and open to all people. In the Ottoman society the administration was nor descended from father to son although the sultanate was transmitted from father to son. And what is more administratorship was not achieved by personal efforts and requests but it was achieved by personal skills and efforts after being educated at the age of childhood by the Palace (Russell, 1990). Another striking example is Sokollu Mehmet Pasha. He was also conscripted and sent to Istanbul while he was living in a small monastery in Bosnia. Then after his education in the devshirme system he became one of the most renowned grand viziers of the Ottoman Empire (Afyoncu, 2007).

Hard times give some chances to discover gifted people for educating. Encountering hardships of life may give a way to find out the gifted people (Zeidner & Zinovich, 2013). Sinan was brought to Istanbul at a tender age. Solely after 30 years he was able to become the head of the Ottoman architects (Saoud, 2007). 30 years can be accepted as a reasonable time for training the skills. If we ignore that time we can not understand the case of Mimar Sinan. Maybe it will be a lack of effort to apprehend Mimar Sinan by just searching his masterpiece works. In order to apprehend him much better we must search the traces of his works during his apprenticeship time in Kayseri. We have to look at the whole life of Sinan holistically. The giftedness is a mood having a season. If the

season for being educated is missed, the giftedness might start to transform into talent. Not receiving a decent education seasonably and as required might cause a change from the distinguished skills into undistinguished skills (Enç, Çağlar & Özsoy, 1987). Because of that fact the kids between 8 and 20 years old were sent to Istanbul in the devshirme system (Ducharme, 2001).

The giftedness may get lost in interregnums. Ups, downs and indecisions are obstacles to rightly educate the gifted and talented people (Zeidner & Zinovich, 2013). Beginning from the childhood Mimar Sinan was occupied with building and its materials. When he was conscripted he tried to get tied up with building. During the military campaigns he was mostly interested in the buildings and construction. He was adamant on building. Indecision can destruct the giftedness in a short time. His persistence on developing the architectural skills gave a way to him towards the chief architect of the Palace. As a matter of fact to select an area of interest is a crucial important in the gifted education (Tortop, 2013).

Luxury and comfort are a kind of barrier of the gifted education. When Mimar Sinan was picked up for the army he left all his comfort. In Tezkiretu'l-Ebniye he described his situation like that:

> Methodically, with my art and my service I practiced since my childhood (Develi, 2003, pp.174).

Mimar Sinan told us that he left his comfort life from his childhood and worked hard more than his peers. When we look at the life Mimar Sinan working hard and not prefering the comfortable life are also important as much as being gifted and talented. By using his skills Mimar Sinan reinterpreted what he saw during the Ottoman military campaigns and created a new architectural style (Sözen, 1975; Kuran, 1986). In these campaigns Alp-Eren (Brave and Mystic) individual type was a reference point for him. He did not neglect what his predecessors did before and benefited from the architectural experiences of previous times.

Giftedness becomes open to be discovered when theoretical and practical applications are brought together. Theoretical ones specify the type of skills. Practical ones open a way to develop and activate the skills. How to activate the skills is important as much as how to discover the skills. After all if the gifted and talented people are able to put being talented, having a good education, a hard working together then they may unearth their talents (Tortop & Eker, 2014). Contrary situation their highly intellectual potentiality may turn gradually into a risky situation both for them and for the society. An appropriate guidance prevents such gifted potentialities to become passive (Uzun, 2004). Already Mimar Sinan had a good guidance of his father and raised in a social situation to be interested in building. After his recruitment to the army his skills were transferred into next level.

A natural giftedness, a teacher to discover it, a proper environment, a good time and a splendid effort were prerequisites for Sinan to make him "Sinan the Great Architect". Especially teachers are significant to increase the potentiality of the gifted and talented kids (Cropley & Urban, 2000). The absence of one of them mentioned above is a sufficient cause to disappear the skills. Already Mimar Sinan tells us that fact in his biographical book Tezkiretu'l-Ebniye (Develi, 2003).

At the present time we have to constitute an educational system to discover the gifted and talented kids. This might become possible with the togetherness of theoretical and practical sides of the life. We need to create a workplace environment pushing the limits of the gifted kids. Therefore we can get a chance to unearth their natural tendency (Tunc, 1926). In addition to this the moral education helps to create an internal discipline and may clean up negative sides of the inborn character. Accordingly the moral education is important to train gifted children. (Hökelekli, & Gündüz, 2007). The moral education should be given before the gifted education. If the gifted children become aware of their superior abilities before creating an internal discipline, they may use this situation as a hegemonic instrument for their peers. The giftedness should not be used as a tool to keep the other kids under constraint. Already the moral education prevents from the feelings of self-righteousness. When the features of the ideal individual type are determined it is a crucial point to support while decoding the gifted individual type intended to educate.

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