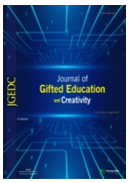

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Research Article

Identification and teaching practices that support inclusion in gifted education

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Abstract

Despite a broadened definition of giftedness that considers talent development and creatively productive aspects, significant challenges remain to improve inclusion in Gifted Education for diverse children and adolescents in P-12 schools. This study summarizes evidence-based screening and formal assessment practices to identify giftedness, talent, and creativity, particularly among underserved populations. Inclusion represents an on-going process for all children, and this study underscores change needed to improve inclusion through identification and teaching practices. Inclusive teaching requires individualized instruction based on global student learning profiles for diverse gifted children in complex societies. Online learning platforms and global professional learning principles in Gifted Education promote inclusive practices that support the growth and development of potential in diverse children and adolescent with giftedness, talent, and creativity in P-12 schools.

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Introduction

Well-established models in Gifted Education, e.g., Renzulli (1976), Gagné (1991), and Heller et al. (2005), recognize giftedness as an intersection of intellectual, creative, and personal components combined with environmental factors. However, IQ scores often comprise the dominant parameter used to identify giftedness in P-12 classrooms. IQ test scores primarily highlight intellective measures of verbal comprehension skills, visual-perceptual reasoning, working memory, and processing speed.

Although IQ tests can signal potential academic or intellectual giftedness, teachers sometimes find IQ score results inadequate to explain the range of gifts, talents, and creativity that children and adolescents demonstrate during classroom activities. Therefore, multiple types of assessments such as pedagogical observations and interventions provide more inclusive identification of giftedness by considering non-intellective factors. Also, parents, teachers, and psychologists provide valuable insight on potential giftedness gained through their interaction with children and adolescents within their environmental context. For example, assessments such as the *Gifted Rating Scales-2* (GRS-2; Pfeiffer & Jarosewich, in press), *The Schoolwide Enrichment Model* (Renzulli, 1976), *Gifted and Talented Evaluation*

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Scales-2 (GATES-2; Gilliam & Jerman, 2015), and Evaluation of Potential Creativity (EPoC; Lubart et al., 2011) address non-intellective factors such as creativity and motivation. The reliance of a single identification measure such as IQ overlooks potential giftedness in diverse children and adolescents by excluding environmental contexts, authentic assessment, and non-intellective considerations. Implementing multiple assessment measures supports inclusion in Gifted Education.

Parents, teachers, and psychologist who collaborate during the identification process diversify perspectives based on their various roles and experiences interacting with children and adolescents potentially identified for giftedness. Environment context then functions as an integral component during the identification process by considering both intellectual and non-intellective factors. By adopting a range of assessments, P-12 schools can identify the qualities and capacities of giftedness in children and adolescents.

Therefore, schools that encourage the collaboration of parents, teachers, and psychologists with multiple assessment measures during the identification process support the first steps of inclusion in the teaching and learning process for all students. This session discusses multiple measures of evidence-based identification practices that support inclusion of diverse gifted, talented, and creative children and adolescents in P-12 schools. Global principles of inclusion, psychological assessment instruments, and pedagogical practices support productive collaboration of parents, teachers, and psychologists as stakeholders in Gifted Education.

Parents, teachers, gifted educators face the challenge of screening and identifying students with giftedness. However, the term *gifted* encompasses students with a wide variety of issues, challenges, and potentialities. Also, the larger issue of multipotentiality remains since students identified as gifted may demonstrate talents including musical skills, artistic abilities, theater potentialities, leadership capabilities, and a variety of other domains. Other students may have creative abilities in terms of originality, divergent thinking, flexible thinking, and inventiveness.

Educators encounter time constraints, the lack of skilled personnel to administer intelligence tests, the challenge of paperwork, administrative concerns, and inadequate funding. However, educators can promote inclusion by casting a wide net through screening identification practices to identify those students who show the glimmer of a sparkle through their previous experiences and those students who teachers and parents believe demonstrate potential previously missed or unrecognized.

Awareness of giftedness through a broadened definition presents a preliminary issue. Teachers, principals, and school boards must understand the need for identification and consider resources the school district can provide to support nurturing and mentoring during independent and directed studies needed for inclusive Gifted Education. Qualified and trained personnel must be available for screening as part of the bigger picture of gifted education. Teachers already stretched thin find themselves asked to provide support and encouragement for all students in an increasingly diverse society. Just as teachers may experience burn out through increasing demands, diverse students with giftedness burn out through dull and boring curriculum that fails to consider their exceptionalities.

Collaboration between schools, teachers, principals, and parents is imperative, and communication among stakeholders is also important. With increasingly cosmopolitan societies, the Internet, text message, and email communication facilitates connectedness in P-12 schools. However, inclusive schools need leaders who are both well versed in the field of gifted education and willing to serve as competent resources.

Professional learning through on-going education and awareness of current research are imperative. Wallace et al. (2018) brought together 40 of the leading scholars in the field of gifted in the *Sage Handbook of Gifted and Talented Education.* Shavinina (2009) provides another useful resource for those involved in the study of gifted, talented, and creative education.

Nomination for Gifted Education Services

Parents

Parents maintain interest in what is best for their children, and caregivers devote time and resources to encourage their children's giftedness, talent, and creativity. Parents are quite observant, and they can observe behaviors that they may

consider peculiar or singular. Parents who consider giftedness may request for formal testing or at least more intensive teaching and stimulating curriculum for their children. Parental nominations present both pros and cons. Parents may see much more to their children than others find. As non-educators, parents are sometimes unaware of developmental milestones. They may be impressed by a comment, question, or response then take that response out of context. Yet, parents can provide a wealth of information about developmental milestones and how one child may appear relative to siblings or other same age peers.

Self and Peers

Children often offer insight into how they are faring relative to their peer group. They may have heard the word *gifted*, investigated it, and decided that they may deserve at least an opportunity to excel and achieve. There is a certain amount of ego and of course a certain amount of bias in terms of self-nominations but if this is an opportunity, students may avail themselves of this. The peer group could be a source of information about an outstanding student with vast potential. Students know who the "bright, intelligent" kids are and are often in awe of them and their potential. Peers could serve as a supplementary source of information.

Teachers in P-12 Schools

Teachers receive their initial licensure after four years of undergraduate coursework, and they may earn specialized graduate degrees. Teachers pursue training or coursework in Gifted Education. After working with general education students, teachers quite often nominate students who are *school smart* and people pleasers with and quiet, meek, and demure comportment in the classroom. They may view referral for gifted service as a reward for proper behavior and people skills rather than recognition of advanced academic potential.

Screening for Giftedness

The GATES-2 (Gillian & Jerman, 2015) represents a screening/rating scale that teachers can administer and evaluate with minimal training. The GATES-2 provides a student profile of various realms with relative areas of strengths and weaknesses for enhancement, improvement, or mentoring. Pfeiffer and Jarosewich (2023) updated the 2003 Gifted Rating Scales screening with innovative features as a second-generation test in Gifted Education (see Shaughnessy & Pfeiffer, 2020; 2022 for more information on the GRS-2). Despite disagreement about its implementation, screening tests form the foundation of inclusive identification.

The realms of intellectual, creative, and talent require assessment of distinct constructs. For example, the K-BIT-II- (Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test-2nd Normative Update (Kaufman & Kaufman, 2022) measures cognitive skills, and teachers may administer it quickly with scoring done by a seasoned professional. However, the K-BIT-II lacks the capacity to assess creative potential or exceptional talent. Educators can administer the Evaluation of Creative Potential (EPoC; Lubart et al., 2011) test of divergent and convergent thinking in specific domains. Parents assist with early identification of giftedness, talent, and creative potential when they notice signs of precociousness, and early childhood educators may recognize unusual aptitudes, skills, and abilities. Screening serves as a starting point during an inclusive identification process. While screening selects students for further testing, the process provides parents and teachers increased understanding about gifted, talented, and creative students and the challenges of identification. Lohman and Lakin (2017) revised the *Cognitive Abilities Test-Form 7* (CogAT) with the equivalent *CoGAT Form 8* with bilingual picture-based items for primary grades. Although these screening tests show promise to identify giftedness, formal testing requires trained examiners to administer test materials with specific protocols.

Formal IQ Testing

After a screening process determines that a student warrants a full individualized intelligence test, there should be a deliberate and thoughtful process of examining the most appropriate test. The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Fifth Edition (WISC-V; Weschsler, 2014) has a long history of published research and standardization. It is widely known and has a plethora of different tests, domains and subtests. The Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales, Fifth Edition (SB-5; Roid, 2003; currently in revision) is another singular test with a long history back to 1905 in Paris, France. Given its high ceiling and well-established reliability, the SB-5 proves useful to identify highly gifted students. The Kaufman

Assessment Battery for Children—Second Edition Normative Update (KABC-II NU; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2018) offers a culturally sensitive assessment of processing rather than verbal-performance. Accordingly, this test may be more appropriate for the neuro-diverse population. The Reynold Intellectual Assessment Scales™, Second Edition (RIAS-2™; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2015) Intelligence Adult Scale-2 provides a brief intelligence test for screening and limited time frames. Although the RIAS-2™ lacks breadth and depth of a full IQ test, it offers reliable composite intelligence scores.

Special Need Students

English Language Learner (ELL) students may demonstrate limited English and vocabulary skills. Students with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) may struggle academically, even with medication as students only receive a maintenance dosage of Ritalin or other stimulant medication. Students with visual impairment must utilize glasses or have accommodations made, and students with hearing impairment must have their hearing aid in good working order. Students with a speech or language disorder or developmental delay may receive treatment or even lack referral for testing; thus, their reticence for referral may impact the testing scores. Students with a health impairment, e.g., asthma, diabetes, hay fever, allergies, must also receive consideration as well as students with other situations (repeated hospitalizations and surgery). Lastly, students with a documented head injury who may or may not have an International Classification of Disease (ICD-10 code). On occasion, students may sustain head injuries that parents do not document.

Cultural Considerations

Different racial, ethnic, minority, disenfranchised, and marginalized cultures exist worldwide whose terms require definition for inclusive identification. Cultures have determined developed an intelligence scale for their own country. For example, Sak et al. (2016) addressed this issue and developed a normed and adapted scale of intelligence for Turkey. The *Anadolu-Sak Intelligence Scale* has received acceptance, acknowledgement, and recognition. Socio-economic status is yet a part of culture and a factor for consideration during evaluation. Students are quite resilient and have taken on duties, obligations, and responsibilities far beyond their years, taking care of siblings and the home.

Inclusiveness in P-12 Schools

Inclusive practices derive from a lengthy process initially designed for students with disabilities (UNESCO, 2020). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, societies locked up students with intellectual disabilities in psychiatric hospitals. Montessori (1943) helped create ways of teaching for children with intellectual disabilities. Only later were pupils with disabilities placed in special or normal schools. The history of special education teaches us that we have moved from inclusion to integration. Integration implies adopting special methodologies for students with learning disabilities. Only later was inclusion born, understood as an educational process that aims to change educational contexts to make them accessible to all. The focus of inclusion is on the context and no longer on the typology of the student's special educational needs. Inclusion is for everyone (Opertti et al., 2014). Each student must have the opportunity to participate during the lessons (Ainscow et al., 2006). Every student has the right to learn new things. It is the teacher's task to change the teaching methods so that the student can participate and learn.

Renzulli (1986) defined giftedness as a phenomenon that occurs in the individual when creativity, high ability, and task commitment emerge. Renzulli highlights the gifted behavior rather than the label of *gifted child* (Shaughnessy, 2019). Gifted children do not coincide only with the number of IQ, but there are non-cognitive traits to consider. Renzulli (2005) suggests an inclusive approach through the Schoolwide Enrichment Model to recognize gifted children. Other models such as the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT; Gagné, 1991) and The Munich Model of Giftedness (Heller, 2005) emphasize non-cognitive elements, and the context that play a new fundamental role in giftedness. Family, school, and society contribute to develop or to block giftedness. Moreover, various enrichment opportunities of life influence giftedness. Positive chance or negative events hide or unmask giftedness. Throughout history, we notice a change of paradigm, from *gifted child* paradigm to *talent development* paradigm (Dai, 2018). From the idea that to be gifted child is necessary to have high IQ for all life (gifted child paradigm), to more flexible concept

based on talent development (talent development paradigm). Extension of definition of giftedness certainly makes identification more complex.

Italian schools face a great discrepancy between the theoretical definitions of giftedness and procedures educators use to identify gifted children. In Italy, identification is based on the value of IQ and lack assessment of creativity and non-cognitive traits. Moreover, identification in Italy comes from only psychologist. In Italy, we rediscovered giftedness in the last three years, sure enough we do not have a law to protect gifted children. In 2019, however, the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research enacted the first official legislation concerning gifted children as those with special educational needs. Teachers can now write a Personalized Educational Plan like those for other special education students. The National Guidelines for Gifted Children remains unpublished due to changes in government legislators. At present, the main way of identifying gifted children in Italy is through the measurement of IQ. However, P-12 schools need more inclusive identification that considers the social-emotional dimension and language barriers that may hide giftedness in students.

If we use only formalized psychometric testing to identify gifted children, we heighten difficulties regarding underserved populations of giftedness, and we lack inclusivity. As UNESCO (2020) reports, inclusion is a process that should exist in all educational contexts. Inclusiveness is for everyone rather than only persons with disabilities. Since 2019, Italian teachers can use rating scales to identify gifted children in a more inclusive way: GATES-2 (2019), Fabio (2019), and the Renzulli Scale (Italian translation; Baccassino, 2022). However, identifying underserved populations of gifted students remains problematic. In Italy, both English Learning Students (ELS) and Italian Language Students (ILS) represent underserved populations due to cultural and linguistic barriers with assessments that focus primarily on verbal skills.

Gubbins et al. (2020) found school districts that adopted universal screening, created alterative pathways, established communication networks, and used professional learning proportionately represented English learners (Els). To mitigate assessment issues, they suggest suggested identification practices across four phases that include (a) Pre-Identification, (b) Preparation, (c) Identification, and (d) Acceptance of Placement. The Pre-Identification phase strategically raises awareness among parents, uses a broadened definition of giftedness, targets subgroups, and gathers data sources to identify giftedness. The Preparation phase concerns staffing and material resources, and the Information phase implements a variety of culturally and linguistically sensitive informal and formal assessment practices. During the Acceptance of Placement phase, schools consider practical considerations such as awareness, accessibility, scheduling, communication, and support services to ensure student success (p. 338).

Siegle et al. (2016) proposed a Talent Development Model as an inclusive and comprehensive way of identifying underserved gifted children with five components. The Pre-Identification component encourages talent scouting and screening measures for hidden abilities otherwise missed due to insufficient background experiences and lack of resources. In the Preparation component, teachers establish a culture of trust, use grouping, and plan culturally, ethnically, and linguistically sensitive instruction. The Identification component uses informal and formal assessment measures to select students who require instruction beyond the general education curriculum. During the Intervention component, schools focus on delivering curriculum and instruction modified to accommodate individual differences through appropriate service delivery models. The Outcomes component monitors student persistence, engagement, and achievement accomplished during modified instruction in core academic areas.

Inclusion and Stakeholders

Inclusive education for students with giftedness considers various perspectives from the significant adults in the lives of children. For example, if teachers write a Personal Education Plan without involving the parents, the process lacks inclusiveness. Inclusive Gifted Education needs to reflect the voice, expertise, and experiences of all stakeholders. The nuances of inclusion reflect the role stakeholders hold in society. Although inclusion in Gifted Education provides students opportunities to gain experience new things, P-12 schools often focus on children's total immersion in heterogeneous classrooms. Students, families, academic researchers, practitioners need representation to optimize

opportunities, so teachers may creatively develop and deliver appropriate experiences to students with giftedness. Since parents may lack understanding about giftedness, they need support to gain awareness of their children's abilities and needs. These considerations enhance parents as active participants in their children's academic experiences.

Creative Potential as Differentness

Teachers who establish creative learning environments address the differentness of creatively productive students. According to Montessori (1943), creative potential belongs to everyone, and the drive to develop potential begins in childhood. Although Montessori believed teachers need to ignite creative potential in all children, yet teachers may lack resources to develop creative learning environments (Bienen, 2013). High-stakes test priorities in may hinder the development of creative potential. Moreover, creativity is highly dependent on context (Corazza et al., 2021), and students with giftedness need enrichment experiences outside of schools to develop creative potential (Runco et al., 2017).

Inclusion and Creativity

The process of inclusion in school contexts connects closely with creativity. Inclusion implies the participation of everyone (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018), and every student has the right to participate and to learn. However, teachers need creative solutions that address the diversity represented in Gifted Education. Inclusive special education practices consider more than identification of disability or giftedness. The uniqueness of individual students may manifest unusual behaviors and attitudes considered but that might indicate creative potential. To promote inclusion. Therefore, teachers need to promote safe environments that promote creative potential classroom. Beghetto (2017) finds teachers need creative teaching methodologies, and they need to welcome elements of creativity in their students. Creative teachers develop new materials, experiment with teaching methods, and find innovative solutions to differentiate instruction. Inclusion in Gifted Education requires a change of perspective. The geode metaphor represents a rich interior of sparkling crystal hidden by an unmarkable exterior when teachers implement inclusive identification and pedagogical practices (Brazzolotto, 2022).

Inclusive Pedagogical Practices

In 1971, the United States Commissioner of Education Sidney Marland introduced the *Education of the Gifted and Talented: Report to Congress* with six types of giftedness: (a) general intellectual ability, (b) specific academic aptitude, (c) creative of productive thinking, (d) leadership ability, (d) visual and performing arts, and (f) psychomotor ability. Fifty years since the dissemination of the Marland Report, the 2020-2021 National Association of Gifted Children *State of the States in Gifted Education* concluded (a) there is no federal mandate to identify or serve gifted; (b) each state determines how to provide services; and (c) individual states provide substantial variation in the quantity and quality of services to children and adolescents identified with giftedness. Despite the broadened conceptualization of giftedness in the Marland Report, serious concerns remain to realize diversity, equity, and inclusion in Gifted Education.

Twice-Exceptionality and Gifted Special Education

Legislative policies support hidden populations of children and adolescents with giftedness so twice-exceptional or 2e students may receive specialized services in P-12 schools. The 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in the United States ensured students with disabilities three things: (a) Individualized Program (IEP), (b) Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE), and Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The special education process involves referral, evaluation, an Individual Education Program (IEP). service delivery, and monitoring process. Students with giftedness may experience another exceptionality that sometimes masks the disability due to their advanced problem-solving abilities. The Bridges 2e Center (n.d.) uses color theory to describe twice-exceptionality with *yellow* to *distinguish strengths* and *blue* for *complex challenges* resulting in *green* representing *2e students*. This growing awareness of diverse gifted students provides challenge and opportunities to address inclusiveness in P-12 classrooms.

Pedagogical Interventions for Inclusion

Giftedness represents an exceptionality that requires specialized services to discover and develop areas of advanced potential. Individualized curricula address the cognitive and affective characteristics and needs of children and adolescents with giftedness. Inclusive evidence-based practices require educators to (a) know the interests and talents of students; (b) plan differentiated curriculum; (c) allow time to improvise new activities; and (d) build empathic and authentic relationships with diverse gifted learners. The Renzulli Learning System (RLS; 2022) offers robust online enrichment services based on The Profiler with manual and wizard options to develop individualized project to enhance academic performance. The Profiler compiles student responses to questions about their interest areas, academic abilities, expression style, and learning style preferences to explore individualized enrichment activities from a database of more than 40,000 curated websites.

Global Principles for Professional Learning

In 2021, the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC) released an international collaboration establishing 10 principles for professional learning in Gifted Education. The *Global Principles for Professional Learning in Gifted Education* include (a) tiered content, (b) evidenced-based, (c) holistic, (d) broad, (e) equitable, (f) comprehensive, (g) ongoing, (h) sustainable, and (i) empowering. A representative research literature base supports each principle, and the principles provide evidence-based practices that support inclusiveness in Gifted Education. Brazzolotto and Phelps (2021) conducted a study integrating the *Global Professional Learning Principles* to co-construct individualized learning menus for a student with giftedness in general education classrooms.

Summary and Conclusion

This study provided an overview of inclusive identification practices, policies, and challenges that promote inclusion in Gifted Education. Despite a broadened conceptualization of giftedness with non-intellectual assessment factors and supportive legislative policies, concerns remain to provide evidence-based practices in general and special education classrooms for children and adolescents with giftedness. Educators need deeper understanding of the diverse types of giftedness that include twice-exceptional, English language learners, and creatively productive gifted students. P-12 schools need intentionality when planning and delivering curricula that address individual differences to advance potential for giftedness, talent development, and creative productivity. Online learning systems and global professional learning principles address complex challenges of inclusion in P-12 learning environments.

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