



How to Raise Awareness in Society on The Importance of Gifted Students? *

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to reveal views of the prospective teachers of individuals with intellectual disability students on how to raise awareness in society on the importance of gifted children to shape our future. The research has been carried out in the pattern of phenomenological method, a type of qualitative research. The participants of the research are consisted of 78 (46 female and 32 male) senior prospective teachers in the department of education of the mentally disabled program in 2015-2016 academic year. In accordance with the aim, participants have been chosen among those who had selected the "education of gifted students" course also they were senior prospective teachers. The results of the research have been obtained by an open-ended question: What can be done in our society to raise awareness on the importance of gifted students to shape our future? The answers of participants have been analyzed by using content analysis method. According to the results of the analysis, the answers of prospective teachers have been combined in eight subjects as a) Social media, b) Politicians, c) Teachers, d) Families, e) Universities, f) Municipalities, g) Artists and h)Other. Also, we can conclude that participants' views on raising awareness on the importance of gifted children in the society are similar to practices performed to raise awareness on individuals with intellectual disability.

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1. Introduction

Gifted children who are neglected in the society have a critical importance for developing humanity because of their intellectual capacity. It is a challenge for the societies to progress, to find a solution to world problems, and to give the societies the necessary boost for those gifted individuals (Clark, 2015) who can bring up important ideas that are needed both now and in the future. Thus, their important roles in a society ensuring the welfare of their societies from past to present, they become one of the most interesting and investigated topics. Education policies and global economic aims of the countries are related to the value given to gifted children for investing in and facilitating innovations in their education in the world (Sak et al., 2015). Leonardo da Vinci, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Vincent van Gogh and Albert Einstein are the examples of gifted and talented individuals who are considered as scientific milestones and are still important for society today. So the question should be, how individuals can be helped to follow in the footsteps for gifted and talented individuals to be one of them? (Şekowski & Łubianka, 2015). In addition gifted individuals have become an important social capital of societies

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as human resources and identification and training of this capital is an important problem in our country (Şahin & Levent, 2015).

It is one of the most important responsibilities of the contemporary education system to discover and educate gifted children to maximize their potential (Şenol, 2011). However, there are inadequacies in their educational opportunities, gifted children's importance are increasing in Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden and Turkey which are countries that have gained momentum in international patent counts (Avcu & Er, 2017). Also The 2013-2017 Strategy and Implementation Plan of Gifted and Talented Individuals indicate that gifted children' education is important for Turkey and also for them (MEB, 2013).

Rakow (2007) indicated that to consider the ideas of stakeholders in the training of gifted individuals have an importance and would increase the collectivity and responsiveness of the institutions. Moreover teachers, students and families' opinions are important to better cooperation and communication for training of gifted individuals and their perspectives should be determined (Coleman & Gallagher, 1992). Also, Gross (2005) stated that the most important gift for gifted individuals are the teachers who are aware of their talent, enjoy striving for their development. Teachers should be trained in the quality and competency that can meet gifted individuals' need arising from personal and mental differences. When gifted adults are talking about teachers they could not forget about, they mention about the teachers who helped them shape their lives and made their differences known to others (Sak, 2010). When it is considered that one of the main factors in the success of education is the teacher, there are some traits that teachers of gifted students need to have. For instance, to be aware of cognitive, social and emotional needs of gifted students and, encourage for self learning. Nonetheless, innovative, experienced and to have a sense of humor is the components that an efficient teacher should have (Tischler & Vialle, 2009). Also, it is important for families to be conscious of gifted children properties. Thus, early stage education will provide better education for children to perform their skills and abilities thorough their life (Harrison, 2000).

Therefore gifted students need special attention to develop their intellectual and psychological potential (Özbay & Palancı, 2011). Gifted education is related to the historical, cultural and political context of a country which may influence policy decision regarding gifted education (Taylor & Kokot, 2000). Furthermore, Renzuli (2012) asked their importance as a question that "Why and how should a society devote special resources to the development of giftedness in young people for the twenty-first century?" in his study. So may be in first step to have special importance in giftedness, society must notice them for their uniqueness. But now what are we doing? According to Enç (2004) there are several educational problems of gifted children such as basic level education at schools is not sufficient for them and also teachers, adults do not show the expected success to notice superior ability so that there is a great risk of blunting the ability. Therefore, giving special education to gifted children is a kind of responsibility of the society. We are just identifying them as mechanically by using standardized test and then lead them in Science-Art Centers in Turkey but then what? Distressingly some of gifted students couldn't get training in Science-Art Centers because of insufficient quato or financial trouble. Therefore, in this study to present potential solutions to raise awarness about the importance of gifted students' education in regard to senior prospective students' views was aimed.

2. Method

In the current study, phenomenological method which is a type of qualitative research was carried out. Phenomenological method tries to reveal the personal sensations, perceptions or perspectives with regard to concepts or phenomenon (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

2.1. Participants

The participants of the research are consisted of 78 students in total, 46 female and 32 male, who had been studying in the final year of the department of intellectually handicapped teaching in spring term

of the 2015-2016 academic year, in the Faculty of Education in a state university. The participation of the students were unpaid, anonymous and voluntary.

2.2. Data collection and analysis

Data was collected with via open-ended question as: "What can be done in our society to raise awareness on the importance of gifted students to shape our future?" by using a form which was constituted by researchers. All participants had time which they need.

Participants' statements were analyzed with content analysis method. For this aim every idea of participants were coded in first step of the study then categories were constituted by the researchers together. Also to increase the reliability and validity, sample of participants' answers were given for all themes.

3. Findings

In the current study, eight categories were found according to the prospective students' statements as: a) Social media, b) Politicians, c) Teachers, d) Families, e) Universities, f) Municipalities, g) Artists and h) Other (in this category composed of several codes which are not combined with any others). These results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Categories and codes of the prospective students about how gifted students raise awareness on the importance of gifted students in society

Categories	Codes	f	%
Social Media	TV programs should be about gifted children	24	%26
	Public service announcement should be showed in TV	12	
	Books should be written about gifted students	10	
	Videos should be added in the internet	5	
	TV commercials should be mentioned giftedness	4	
	Groups should be composed in social networking sites	3	
	Radio programs should be mentioned about gifted students	3	
	Journals should be mentioned about gifted students	2	
	Newspapers should be contain news about gifted students	2	
Main news bulletin should be mentioned about them in TV	1		
Politicians	Financial support should be provided to gifted students	19	%14.6
	Foundations and associations should be supported by politicians	7	
	Functional policy should be developed	6	
	Postgraduate students should be supported financially	5	
	President of the republic should be mentioned gifted students	2	
Financial support should be given academicians for articles, books	1		
Teachers	In-service training should be given all	15	%13.5
	Primary school teachers should be educated	9	
	Preschool teachers should be educated	7	
	School counselor should be educated	2	
	School counselor should be educate the families	2	
Teachers should be lead to abroad for education	2		
Families	Families should be educated	27	%16.8
	Families should be informed by the other families about giftedness	16	
	Families should be informed near abroad	3	
Universities	All departments of the faculties of education should be a lesson about gifted students	8	%6.6
	Gifted students' products should be exhibited in science festival in around the campuses	4	
	University students should be done something as part of lesson of community service practices	4	
	Universities should have programs for gifted students	2	
Municipalities	Several stands should be opened in city centers to inform the society	20	%12.1
	Billboards should be used for arouse attention in society	8	
	Science and art centers should be popularized in all counties	5	
Artists	Artists should be play a part of films about gifted students	14	%8.8
	Serial films should be made about gifted students	5	
	Theaters should be made about gifted students	4	
	Documentaries should be made about gifted students	1	
Other	Family physicians should be educated about the properties of gifted children	4	%1.4

According to the Table 1 participants' opinions mainly combined the category of social media and these are respectively as; TV programs should be about gifted children (f=24), public service announcement should be showed in TV (f=12), books should be written about gifted students (f=10), videos should be added in the internet (f=5), TV commercials should be mentioned giftedness (f=4), groups should be composed in social networking sites (f=3), radio programs should be mentioned about gifted students (f=3), journals should be mentioned about gifted students (f=2), newspapers should be contain news about gifted students (f=2), main news bulletin should be mentioned about them in TV (f=1). Considering these results we can say that social media is the most important way to raise attention about giftedness in society. Here are some examples by participants:

F3: I think people spend most of their time in front of TV nowadays. For this reason, I think TV programs about gifted children can be effective.

M18: As how public spots are made about Autism and Down syndromes it can be made for gifted people, as well.

F19: I once read the book "Hope Light" (if I remember it correctly), which explains what a mother, who has an autistic child, is doing for her child. It made a big impression on me. I think books like this can be written about gifted people.

Category of politicians is composed of seven codes that financial support should be provided to gifted students (f=19), foundations and associations should be supported by politicians (f=7), functional policy should be developed (f=6), postgraduate students should be supported financially (f=5), president of the republic should be mentioned gifted students (f=2), financial support should be given academicians for articles, books (f=1). Several participants's statements were as follows:

F21: Although families with children with intellectual disabilities can receive support from the government, but not for those with gifted children. In this regard, politicians can make arrangements.

F32: There is a institute named "Tohum Autism Foundation" for autistics and it receives economic support from this town. Institutions like these can be established and supported for gifted.

M30: When the president makes a speech, millions listen to him. It may be very useful to talk about somewhere in his speech about gifted in a short while of speaking.

Category of teachers is composed of codes as; in-service training should be given all (f=15), primary school teachers should be educated (f=9), preschool teachers should be educated (f=7), school counselor should be educated (f=2), school counselor should be educate the families (f=2), teachers should be lead to abroad for education (f=2). The significant statements by M3 and M12 could be given as an example:

M3: Many teachers do not even know what gifted means. First of all, it is beneficial to get them educated.

M12: I think the most important thing to be made is that classroom teachers to give training in this regard. Because they are the ones who nominate for being diagnosed.

Category of families composed of families should be educated (f=27), families should be informed by the other families about giftedness (f=16), Families should be informed near abroad (f=3). Universities category is combined with all departments of the faculties of education should be a lesson about gifted students (f=8), gifted students' products should be exhibited in science festival in around the campuses (f=4), university students should be done something as part of lesson of community service practices (f=4), universities should have programs for gifted students (f=2). Here are some examples by participants:

F41: It must be started at the bottom to create societal awareness. In a society, the more we know about this, the more effective the families we call the core.

F17: Families who have gifted children know this situation best. For this reason they may inform other families in their surroundings.

M11: In this regard, education should be initiated by creating awareness among the most important institutions in education. For this, each course can be compulsory lessons.

One of the other category is municipalities have three codes that several stands should be opened in city centers to inform the society (f=20), billboards should be used for arouse attention in society (f=8), science and art centers should be popularized in all counties (f=5). Category of artists is composed of artists should be play a part of films about gifted students (f=14), serial films should be made about gifted students (f=5), theaters should be made about gifted students (f=4), and documentaries should be made about gifted students (f=1). The mention from the answers is given as:

M22: We (students) are standing here for concerts. Similarly, information centers can be opened in the city centers.

F12: Aamir Khan had a movie, named 3 idiots. It was the frst time I realized there was a genius child's success. Now, for example, Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ (he is a well known artist in Turkey) draws much attention if starring in such a movie.

The last category of other is composed of family physicians should be educated about the properties of gifted children (f=4). According to these results to raise attention to giftedness in society should be provided with mainly using social media, secondly families category is important for this.

4. Discussion

The current study aims to reveal the prospective students' opinions about how the society arouses importance. For this aim senior class of education of the mentally disabled program students' opinions were researched. According to the results eight categories revealed: a) Social media, b) Politicians, c) Teachers, d) Families, e) Universities, f) Municipalities, g) Artists and h) Other. In the subject of social media, "TV programs should be about gifted children (f=24)"; in the subject of politicians, "Financial support should be provided gifted (f=19)"; in the subject of teachers, "In-service training should be given all (f=15)"; in the subject of families, "Families should be educated (f=27)"; in the subject of universities, "All departments of the faculties of education should be a lesson about gifted students (f=8)"; in the subject of municipalities, "Several stands should be opened in city centers to inform the society (f=20)"; and in the subject of artists, "Artists should be play a part of films about gifted students (f=14)" codes; in the subject of others, "Family physicians should be educated about the properties of gifted children (f= 4)" came into prominence. It is obvious that there are many studies on different issues concerning the social media's effect on a society (Alav, 2014; Demirtaş, 2003). It is also known that social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram are mostly used by university students according to students' educational level (Davenport, Bergman, Bergman & Fearington, 2014). Therefore, it is consistent with the fact that prospective teachers emphasize social media as a priority.

According to observations of families with gifted children, these children exhibit extraordinary behavior starting from their first years of development (Harrison, 2000). It is important for parents and teachers to be aware of the characteristics of gifted children. Thus, it can be said that prospective teachers have stated that parents and teachers are primarily involved in raising awareness.

Moreover Özkan (2009) declared in the study of evaluating the organizational effectiveness of science and art centers in accordance with the opinions of managers, teachers, parents and students in Turkey, there are many problems about science and art centers effectiveness of the studies because of the lack

of a budget reserved by the Ministry, insufficiency of the in-service training seminars which is going to make contribution to the improvement of the teachers and administrators and also according to parents the students aren't guided adequately in accordance with their skills and there is no research about investigation of science and art centers' studies. This study is consistent with our codes such as: "In-service training should be given all", "Financial support should be provided to gifted students".

In gifted children education, the lacks of qualified employment policies directly and effectively thorough individuals cause to brain drain the end of the training process to self-develop to Western countries. In terms of legislative efforts towards gifted children to get high education standards, there is a need to exemplary carrier planning programs, supporting financial sources, being in communication in virtual environments effectively, cooperating with technology oriented instructions and work opportunities an internship (Birdiřli & Özdemir, 2009).

Educational practices, teaching methods/techniques and classroom management strategies should be differentiated for gifted education. Because potential will be released when appropriate learning environments offered. Croft (2003) indicates that gifted students are influenced by their teachers' attitudes and actions deeper than their peers. This means that to reveal the potential of gifted students accurately, practitioners of gifted students need to apply professional development related to their knowledge for teaching as well as ongoing reflection on their practice (Park & Oliver, 2009). On the other hand according to gifted students' perspective teachers should be enthusiastic, disposed to lifelong learning, creative thinking, and good at communication skills (Vialle & Quigley, 2002).

Additionally, it is seen that the participants' opinions on raising awareness on the importance of gifted children in the society are similar to practices performed to raise awareness on individuals with intellectual disability.

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