



IDENTIFYING AND CATERING FOR GIFTED LEARNERS IN AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM: A MEANS OF REDUCING DELINQUENCY, SCHOOL DROP OUT RATE AND INCREASING NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

A regular classroom contains a diverse group of learners. Learners with very divergent characteristics sometimes. Classroom activities should be planned in such a way that every learner's needs are provided for and every learner is guided towards achieving his maximum potential. Failure to do so may lead some learners into delinquent behaviors and some may even drop out. Classroom activities seem to be planned with the average learners and the learning disadvantaged in mind. Most times learning facilitators do not factor in the needs of gifted children when planning classroom activities. It is believed that 6% of students in the public school are gifted. This percentage of students have the capacity to impact positively on national development if their gifts are identified and maximized. However, this seems not to be the case. Only the gifted students who find their way into specialized gifted schools have the privilege of having their gifts developed. The program for selection of students into gifted programs seems to be flawed in climes where statistics exist. To the extent that minority groups and low-income groups seem to be discriminated from assessing gifted programs. The researcher's position regarding this situation is that every school prepares for the gifted child as well while selecting and designing learning experiences. That every classroom facilitator be equipped to identify and to cater the needs of the gifted child within the normal inclusive classroom in order that no child's gift is ignored. Teacher's training programs should include training for identification and catering for gifted children. This will also reduce the rate of delinquency and school drop out that results from boredom of gifted children who are under-challenged and contribute to national development. This paper covers the following areas: Introduction, theoretical framework, the concept of giftedness in the classroom, characteristics of gifted learners, Giftedness as a means for reducing delinquency, school dropout rate and achieving national development, identifying gifted learners, meeting the needs of the gifted child in an inclusive classroom, and conclusion.

KEYWORDS: Gifted, talented, inclusive classroom, psychometric testing, national development

INTRODUCTION

Psychologists of the 21st century are aware of individual differences and also strive to ensure that the plethora of differences that may present

in a regular classroom are attended to, to the extent that every individual in the classroom is provided equal opportunity for growth, development, and maximization of their potentials, irrespective of their differences.

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Attending to individual differences in the classroom is important to ensure proper human resource harnessing and development in the nation and also to avoid problems that may arise either from ignoring or mismanagement of certain differences in the classroom.

Differences in the classroom range from, physical differences, emotional differences, intellectual differences, socio-economic differences to personality differences, etc. That is to say, in the same class, we may have learners with poor vision, normal vision, auding limitations, motor limitations such as problems with the use of their hands, feet etc. We may have learners whose Intelligence Quotient (IQ) is in the higher 15th percentile or who completely exceed records of intelligence for their age, we may also have slow learners, we may have children from very rich homes and others from poor homes etc. There may be children with significant gifts in fine and applied arts, music, athletics etc. and there may yet be others who combine very high IQ with some other talent or exceptional ability or the twice exceptional who combine giftedness with a challenge such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or other challenges. All these differences arise from genetic and environmental differences and must be attended to in order to ensure that every learner maximizes his/her potential.

Giftedness among learners seems to be an aspect of facilitating learning that is most ignored and seems to bring a lot of disagreement. Teachers are so engrossed in designing and utilizing strategies that meet the need of the average learners, the slow learners and the learning challenged; that the gifted learners seem to have been forgotten. Learning facilitators (teachers) and educators in general also seem to differ on how giftedness should be attended to in the learning environment. Many educators and facilitators of learning subscribe to having a special school for gifted children. Others however, believe in having a separate arm, that is a special class for gifted children.

Having a special school or a special arm for learners may improve the way gifted children are attended to, but first there is a process for identification of gifted learners. During this process many categories of gifted learners may be discriminated against or may go unnoticed. Research has shown that gifted children's programs are usually flooded by individuals from majority groups, from high income families etc.,

while learners from minority groups, such as Latinos, Blacks, Hispanics etc. and from low-income families have limited access to gifted programs, (Dreilinger, 2019; NAGC, 2008). Drew, (2019) also pointed out that according to a report from Purdue University's Gifted Education Research and Resource Institute (GER21) as many as 3.6 million gifted children are ignored in U. S. public schools. This statistic may be higher for Nigerian schools.

In the light of these facts, it is pertinent that every education program includes programs for identifying the gifted children and meeting their needs within the regular classroom. It is the belief of the researcher that the best approach to meeting the needs of gifted children is to have an inclusive classroom for everyone with special attention paid to the gifted, the slow learners and all learners with special needs; in order to provide enrichment and other activities to meet the needs of gifted learners. This position is also anchored on the fact that as adults these gifted children will live in an inclusive society not an exclusive one and will have to work with all types of people. An inclusive classroom seems to build tolerance and acceptance and generally make them more emotionally balanced. This position also recognizes the fact that there are diverse types of giftedness and every learner is gifted in one way or the other. It also recognizes the fact that some learners may be more gifted than others. Learning activities in an inclusive classroom can be designed and delivered in such a way that the gifts of every learner are well accounted for. This implies that the various gifts of learners are identified in the course of their school life, and their giftedness is harnessed both for personal and societal benefits.

This paper is focused on how the gifts of all children can be identified and harnessed and the needs of gifted children can be provided for within the context of a normal classroom to ensure that their potentials are maximized rather than negatively directed. Very gifted children if not properly stimulated and if their energies are not well directed could out of boredom and a need to utilize available energies; both mental and physical, channel their energies into deviant and destructive behaviors becoming a menace to society. That is why it is imperative that the classroom be so diverse and engaging that the interest of the diverse learners in the classroom are accommodated, that all learners can find opportunities for self-expression in their unique

areas of interest and gifting, particularly in the primary and secondary school level.

Gifted learners, implies learners with very high IQ, within the top 15th percentile of the IQ range, or who break IQ records for their age. Learners with exceptional talent in areas like music, fine arts, sports etc, or learners who combine exceptional talent with exceptionally high IQ; usually referred to as the doubly gifted, are also gifted. A good classroom is one in which every learner has equal opportunity for growth and maximization of their potentials; that is the kind of classroom being advocated for in this paper.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

THEORY OF SUCCESSFUL INTELLIGENCE BY R. J. STERNBERG (1999)

This theory was propounded by Robert J. Sternberg in 1999. It is subdivided into the theory of Successful Intelligence and the theory of Practical intelligence or common sense. It is defined as the ability to set and accomplish successfully, personally meaningful goals within the context of the individual's culture. This is done by the successfully intelligent person; successfully identifying his strength and weaknesses, maximizing and focusing on his strengths while compensating for or correcting his weaknesses. He identified four skills that define strength and weaknesses; creative skills, analytical skills, practical skills and wisdom-based skills. The processes involved in these skills are higher order mental processing skills such as planning, monitoring and evaluation. This theory buttresses the fact that intelligence should be defined in an individual as well as cultural bases. Intelligent students may have weaknesses. The facilitators of learning can help them focus on their strengths and develop it. It also points out the fact that higher order skills are more important with intelligent people. When taken in this context, every child is gifted. The focus is in ensuring that the classroom responds to the different gifts that will manifest in the classroom and ensure that these gifts are developed.

THEORY OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE BY H. GARDNER (1983)

This theory was propounded by Howard Gardner in 1983 in his book 'Frames of Mind'. This theory proposed that definition of intelligence in terms of intellectual ability or a single special ability is limiting. He proposed that different people

possess different kinds of intelligences. He proposed eight kinds of intelligence; Musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, spatial-visual intelligence, linguistic-verbal intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, Intra-personal Intelligence, naturalistic intelligence. He recently suggested the addition of a ninth type of intelligence, existentialist intelligence.

This theory supports the position of this paper, which is that a gifted child can be catered for in an inclusive classroom. Everyone is gifted in one way or the other and they are multiple intelligences. The gifted child left in an inclusive classroom has a lesson to learn from the diverse types of intelligences displayed by a vast number of individuals. Most importantly, an inclusive classroom represents a microcosm of the society for which the gifted child is being prepared. An inclusive classroom prepares the gifted child to be able to face the challenges and survive in the real world. The problem of seclusive or exclusive education for the gifted child is the fact that the child's area of giftedness maybe well developed, but the gifted child raised in an exclusive classroom may become a social misfit because his classroom does not depict the reality of the world where he would have to deal with different kinds of individuals, the gifted and the normal or even the deficient child.

SUBLIMATION PRINCIPLE, SIGMUND FREUD (1894)

Sublimation is a defense mechanism, which according to Sigmund Freud involves the channeling of available sexual and aggressive energy in individuals into societally acceptable pursuits. Young people have a reservoir of available energy that can be channeled usefully. If these energies are not properly channeled, they could be channeled destructively. Parents and facilitators of learning could leverage on this knowledge to ensure that the energies of young people are properly channeled. That is, they are sufficiently stimulated both mentally and physically. This channeling should align with their interest, their gifts and abilities. Failure to constructively channel the energies available to adolescents particularly the gifted might lead to them destructively channeling available energies into delinquent and undesirable behaviors.

CONCEPT OF GIFTEDNESS IN A CLASSROOM

The concept of giftedness often inspires a picture of an intellectual. An individual with a high intellectual capacity. Giftedness however, transcends the intellectual sphere. FRN in Ozoji, Unachukwu and Kolo (2016) views a gifted or a talented person as an individual who either possesses very high intelligent quotient or is naturally endowed with special abilities in art, creativity, music, leadership, intellectual precocity etc. and as a result of his gift or special endowment is insufficiently challenged in a regular educational setting.

According to the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) (n.d.) children are gifted when they have abilities that surpass the norm for their age. The association recognizes that giftedness could be in one or several domains which may include, intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership or in a particular academic field such as language arts, Mathematics etc. The National Association for Gifted Children, Washington D. C. in Amicangelo (2003) Opined that a gifted person is one who demonstrates or is potentially able to demonstrate exceptional performance in one or more areas of expression. This implies that children with potentials are also gifted but require the right environment for expression of their giftedness and maximization of their potentials. Amicangelo (2003) stated that an Intelligent Quotient (IQ) score of 130 and above is generally accepted as an indication of giftedness, but it does not tell the entire story about the gifted child. This is apparent because a child's giftedness may not be limited to the intellectual sphere. It may be in art or another area of expression hence the gifted child may not necessarily possess high IQ scores.

Renzulli (1978) opined that the interaction of three basic clusters of human traits gives rise to gifted behavior. The three basic human traits according to Renzulli (1978) are; above average level of general and or specific abilities, high levels of task commitment or motivation, and high levels of creativity. Renzulli believed that gifted or talented children possess or are able to develop these three abilities and apply them to a potentially viable area of human endeavor. The school wide enrichment model says that gifted behaviors are only found in certain people, at certain times in certain circumstances. That is to say that certain circumstances bring out the potential for giftedness in a learner and other

circumstances do not. This further implies that; the learning environment has a significant role to play in promoting or developing the giftedness in a child. It is the believe of the researcher however, that every individual possesses some kind of gifts, some of which may not be academically relevant. More learners than are usually acknowledged seem to be gifted.

According to research as a result of the wide range of abilities involved in the definition of giftedness, inclusive education is necessary in other to avoid many gifted groups being unaccounted for and hence neither provided nor catered for within the educational environment, (McCoach, Kehle, Bray & Siegle in Ozoji, Unachukwu & Kolo, 2016). This position is apt, we must cast our nets wider.

The word gifted is sometimes used interchangeably with talented. Some schools of thought have however attempted to differentiate between talent and gift. One of such is Gagne. Gagne in Page (2006) opined that the terms gifted and talented do not mean the same thing and hence cannot be used interchangeably. He states that the natural or innate abilities with which a child is endowed in the different domains constitutes the child's gifts, while the development of these gifts through certain modalities to its full potential is talent. Hence talent, is the gift developed.

Gagne's opinion thus opens a discussion on the fact that gifted children are naturally endowed. Clark in Manning (2006) stated that the growth of intelligence depends on the interaction between the natural endowment of the gifted and environmental opportunities. There is therefore, undoubtedly a huge role for educators, parents and other stakeholders in determining the path of the gifted. Moore (2020) stated that, it is believed that approximately 6% of all public-school students are gifted. This 6% are a minority in comparison to the 94% that are not gifted and so it is easy to forget about them and prepare for the average student. This, however, will be an error. Taking this minute population into consideration and harnessing their gifts could be a major change broker.

In summary, gifted individuals display a level of competence in their area of giftedness that is above the norm for their age group. They are exceptional in their area of giftedness. Gifted children require a catalyst in order to develop their gifts into talents and maximize their potentials. The school environment should

provide the catalyst in terms of environment and programs in order to maximize the potential of every child particularly the gifted. Every school, every classroom should be equipped to identify and cater to the educational needs of the gifted.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED LEARNERS/ DIVERSE MANIFESTATIONS OF GIFTEDNESS IN THE CLASSROOM

Gifts of learners', manifest in different ways both in and out of their classrooms. It is important to note that one gifted learner is unlikely to manifest all the characteristics that will be listed and the available characteristic may not manifest in the learner in the wrong environment. It becomes pertinent to fall back on the root word of Education which is said to be derived from the Latin word Educere which means 'To lead forth' or 'to draw out' to ensure that gifts of all learner, particularly the gifted, are drawn out. Facilitators of learning may need to intentionally adopt strategies and create a learning environment and learning experiences that will draw out or lead out learners' giftedness.

Some characteristics that are manifestations of giftedness as listed by Okoye (2013) include: unusual alertness in infancy and later, early and rapid learning, rapid language development as a child, superior language ability (verbally fluent, large vocabulary and complex grammar), academic superiority, large knowledge base, superior analytic ability, reasoning, and high-capacity memory, high curiosity and exploration (for example, having interest in new topics, going beyond what was taught and exploring how and why), high career ambitions, active in getting and sharing information, enjoying learning, reading, asking many and critical questions, motivating others, demonstrating self-confidence, thriving on complexity and becomes unusually upset at injustice, criticizing works for self and others, making sophisticated use of techniques and media, discussing in detail, enjoying debating, relating well with adults, etc.

Amicangelo (2003) of the Stepping Stone School for Gifted Education listed the following additional characteristics of giftedness observed in gifted children:

1. High level of intensity in terms of emotion, passion and interest. This intensity can be sustained for long periods and may tend towards obsessive compulsive behavior.

1. Depth of perception: gifted children are unique in their perception of life and experiences.

There is an unusual depth to their perception. They are able to view life and experiences from different perspectives, are able to recognize patterns, perceive problems and identify unique problem-solving methods. They are able to recognize authenticity in people, display compassion, fairness, need for justice and demonstrate a good sense of humor.

2. Keen sense of observation and extra ordinary memory - They have a keen sense of observation and pay great attention to details that are usually salient and unnoticeable to others. They also have an enormous memory with details and extraordinary ability for recall.

3. Ability to recognize more options - Gifted children can identify and recognize more options in diverse situations than the regular child. They can adopt unique trajectories to providing solutions to problems.

4. Dislike repeating or practicing something they already know - Gifted children will learn faster and grasp concepts faster than their peers. This implies that when the teacher in a classroom is repeating a certain piece of information for the benefits of the average learner the gifted learner is likely to be bored. Also, when practice questions are kept too simple and not challenging for the gifted child boredom may set in which could translate to disruptive behavior. The facilitator of learning has to be prepared to handle this. Methods of dealing with this characteristic will be addressed in later subheadings.

5. Perfectionist - Gifted children recognize and seek perfection. Inability to achieve perfection could lead to frustration. Emphasis should be on these children putting in their best in all situations.

6. Perseverance - They can persevere in areas related to their passion in learning more about it and achieving their goals.

7. High level of sensitivity - They are more emotionally sensitive than the average child. They are sensitive about themselves and others too. They are morally sensitive and empathic and this is related to their ability to notice details in tone of voice, gestures etc.

Manning (2006) categorized the characteristics of gifted children into cognitive and affective characteristics, completely ignoring the psychomotor characteristics. His works focusses on the intellectually gifted. That is one of the errors of the teachers in identifying giftedness. Giftedness may be in specific areas such as art, music, ICT,

mechanical etc. Learners gifted in these areas also need help in developing their gifts and should not be ignored. Some characteristics of giftedness that surfaced from Manning (2006) categorizations include: Cognitive characteristics -goal oriented, innovative and unique solution pathways, need for freedom and individuality in learning situations; may prefer to work alone, prefer complex and challenging tasks, transfer and apply knowledge to new situations. Affective characteristics include: a lot information about emotions, keen or subtle sense of humour. Idealism, sense of justice and advanced moral judgement. High expectations of self and others, a strong need for consistency in self and others. Teachers should look out for these characteristics in learners as a first step towards identifying gifted learners.

GIFTEDNESS AS A MEANS FOR REDUCING DELINQUENCY, SCHOOL DROP OUT RATE AND ACHIEVING NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Harnessing the gifts of the 25% of the population that may be gifted is definitely a strategy for national development. Helping gifted children discover and develop their gifts will make room for innovations and discoveries in the different works of life. This fact has been alluded to in the National Policy of Education (1981) which states that for technological and scientific development and the achievement of a self-reliant nation; it is imperative that the gifted population in Nigeria be given a kind of education that meets their needs and is commensurate with the rate of their mental growth. Hildreth in Ahmed (n.d.) and Kobo in Ahmed n. d.) are of the opinion that special attention must be given to nurturing the gifted child in order to release the potentials of the gifted for the benefits of society and forestall the negative consequences to society that is likely to be the faith of the nation if the gifted are not identified and their gifts nurtured, focussed and directed positively.

Failure to positively direct the gifts of gifted children may lead to them destructively applying their gift and energies. According to the Hechinger's report in Drew (2019), some gifted learners who fail to make it into gifted programs end up bored, disengaged, under perform or even drop out from school. This is due to the fact that they are insufficiently challenged and their potentials underexploited. If every school ensures that they are prepared for identification and

sufficiently challenging the gifted child, it will invariably lead to a reduction in delinquency and school drop-out rates.

Emerson (2007) stated that when instructions is not rigorous and expectations are not high the gifted learners are likely to settle into patterns of underachievement, develop poor organization and study skills and may not reach their full potentials.

National development is achieved based on a number of factors. All hands need to be on deck for the achievement of national development. However, history has shown that the input of a few individuals in the nation can greatly accelerate national development. Examples will be in developed nations such as the United States of America where the gifts and exceptional skills displayed by a few can bring about global change. Individuals like Bill Gates the founder of Microsoft Corporation, Steve Jobs the Founder of Apple and Mark Zuckerberg are individuals whose exceptional works has not only brought enormous development to their nations but has changed the course of global interactions forever. If an enabling environment is provided, it is believed that individuals with exceptional endowments will also rise up with innovations in art, technology and other fields that will benefit the nation. It is also believed that harnessing the gifts of gifted individuals will bring a reduction in the rate of delinquency, gang activities and the likes as most of the gang groups according to Ahmed (n. d.) are led by highly gifted individuals. Based on the characteristics of gifted individuals listed above; gifted children are able to device innovative solutions to problems. They are lots of problems both global and local begging for solutions. Harnessing the gifts of the gifted population is likely going to lead to solutions to these problems.

IDENTIFYING A GIFTED CHILD

Gifted children are part of regular classrooms particularly in public schools. This premise is based on the fact that apart from the tiny fraction of Nigerians who make an attempt to send their children to the school of the gifted, there do not seem to exist a program in most of our schools in Nigeria for the identification of gifted learners in the classroom.

Having outlined several characteristics of gifted learners; being aware of the fact that giftedness does not manifest in the same way in learners, based on the principle of individual difference,

there should be a deliberate program designed to identify giftedness in learners.

According to the NAGC (n. d.) the following factors must be considered in identifying gifted learners:

1. Giftedness is dynamic not static. Evaluation for giftedness should be carried out over a period of time using multiple methods that provide ample opportunity for expression of gifts.
2. Giftedness is not limited based on race, ethnic group, income levels or any other criteria. Giftedness occurs across all races, ethnic groups, income levels etc. Identification processes must be culture sensitive in order not to place any group at a disadvantage.
3. Giftedness maybe exhibited within a specific interest group, or sub-interest group. Drawing from the theory of multiple intelligence, giftedness may be in other categories beyond intellectual intelligence. Hence opportunities must be provided for identifying various types of giftedness.
4. Early identification is an advantage. Identification must start at lower levels of learning.

The NAGC, (2008) opines that the process of identifying gifted children for gifted programs must include the use of “defensible measurement practices”, NAGC (2008, par 2.). Both the selection of the type of psychometric tests to be used, to the administration and interpretation of results must be professionally done by adequately trained and qualified personnel. NAGC (2008) advocates the use of multiple assessment types and methods, such as individual testing, group testing, objective tests, performance tests, rating scales, interviews, classroom observation of student behaviors etc. They also advocate that testing be carried out in a fair and ethical manner.

According to NAGC (n.d.) a multi phasic method including the use of objective and subjective methods for identification is encouraged. Objective methods include: Individual Intelligence and achievement tests, students’ cumulative records. Bear in mind that relying on IQ scores may ignore other areas of giftedness. Subjective methods prescribed by NAGC (n.d.) include:

nominations by self, parent, teachers, administrators etc. By completing gifted characteristics check-lists, inventories and nomination forms; Teacher observations and ratings using learning and motivational scales, Portfolios and performances in language arts, mathematics, creative arts such as speech, art, music pursuits etc; and student educational profiles which are case studies of the students.

Peter, Carter and Plucker (2020) outlined some best practices in gifted students’ identification. They include:

1. Establish the purpose of Identification.
 1. focus on the needs of the students and services not labels, identification of students for advanced learning or accelerated programs should be seen as temporary not permanent. This criterion seems to support the position that giftedness is dynamic and not static as stated by NAGC (n. d.).
2. Cast a wide net: Test large amounts of students. This reduces the risk of ignoring minority populations.
3. Choose the right comparisons: Focus on comparisons with local populations. Norm reference tests should use norms suitable for the particular population being tested.
4. Be proactive about equity. Choose tests that are appropriate for the population and do not discriminate. Such as culture fair tests.
5. Be careful when using multiple measures: Ensure that multiple measures does not introduce bias
6. More services for more students: This advocates for using a more inclusive approach that makes a wide range of specialized and personalized advanced learning services available to a wider group of learners who may need it. This is indeed the crust of this paper. Our schools should integrate services that are capable of meeting the needs of all types of students on an individual level within an inclusive classroom. This ideology may seem far-fetched but with more commitment, training and hard work it is achievable. The following are some of the tests that could be used as part of a multi-phasic program for identification of gifted learners.

TABLE 1: SELECTED LIST OF TESTS FOR IDENTIFYING GIFTED LEARNERS

SCALES	ACHIEVEMENT TESTS	ABILITY TESTS	NON VERBAL TESTS	GROUP TESTS
Purdue Academic Rating Scales (PARS)	Test of Mathematical Abilities for Gifted Students	Stanford Binet (L-M)	Naglieri Nonverbal Ability test	CogAT
Whitmore Underachievement Scales	Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary Students (SAGES)	Wescher Intelligence Scale for Children 4 th Edition	The test of Non verbal Intelligence	Otis-Lenon
Rimm Underachievement Scale		Woodcock Johnson		Hemmon-Nelson
Scales for Rating behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (Renzulli and Smith 1977)				Ravens Progressive Matrices
				Matrix Analogies test

Adapted from NAGC (n. d.)

CATERING TO THE NEEDS OF A GIFTED CHILD IN AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

In order for the gifts of children to be identified and harnessed in an inclusive classroom the school authorities and the facilitators of learning most especially, have to be sufficiently motivated, well trained, sufficiently creative and be willing to put in a lot of work and dedication. Identifying the gifts of learners and harnessing or honing their subjective gifts is something that must be done intentionally. It should make up path of the objectives of the school.

ACCELERATED COURSES

The definition of accelerated programs may differ with the author. Acceleration to this author means, progressing on the curriculum on a particular subject or course based on the level of cognitive development and comprehension of the individual student. Accelerated programs do not keep all learners at the same level but

progresses on the curriculum as the individual learner progresses.

Colangelo et al in Emerson (2007) stated that the goal of acceleration is adapting the level and complexity of the curriculum to the specific abilities and academic readiness of the individual learner. This will ensure that the intellectually gifted learner, or even learners gifted in specific subject areas are not bored in the classroom as they wait for classmates to level up to their abilities. This will in turn ensure that the energies of the gifted learners are not destructively channeled into delinquent activities. Many strategies for meeting the needs of gifted learners could be classified under this subheading.

ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Enrichment programs involves diversifying the curriculum for individual learners beyond the general curriculum and including elements based on the general curriculum that are more

challenging. Wu (2013, 2) attempted to differentiate between accelerated programs and enrichment programs thus:

“Enrichment programs can be seen as “horizontal” programs within the same grade levels that includes academic modifications on speed, depth and breadth regarding learning content, process and products, while acceleration can be referred to as “vertical” programs that include different levels of grade skipping, early entrance to school or college”

Acceleration, could be done without grade skipping, particularly if the learner is gifted only in specific subject areas. Skipping classes based on intellectual capabilities sometimes leads to setbacks due to the fact that the learners may not have developed the affective skills to deal with higher classes and the process of skipping. Skipping, based on personal experience, seems to leave gaps that the learner maybe left to fill without the support of the learning facilitators (the teachers). Skipping, if chosen as a method for meeting the needs of gifted learners should be accompanied by support from the teachers both academically and psycho-emotionally to equip the learner to deal with academic gaps and also establishing relationships and settling down in the new class with older classmates. Should the learner display exceptional ability in all subject areas, a special school maybe a good idea.

Wu (2013) stated that enrichment programs may include within-class ability groups, special classes within or without the school, special schools, after school activities and weekend classes. The aim of these program according to Piirto in Wu (2013) is to broaden the curriculum and include dimensions that are not included in the regular curriculum.

INDIVIDUALIZED ASSIGNMENTS, PROJECTS AND GRADING

This is a strategy that could be used during the implementation of an enrichment program. Assignment and projects that are more complex, challenging and may require higher order skills than what has been included in the curriculum could be given to the gifted learner while the rest of the class grapples with less complex material.

Grading could also be individualized based on the teacher’s knowledge of their specific interest and abilities. A higher level of delivery may also be required of the gifted learners. Hence, in instances where the assignment given to classmates are the same; if the gifted learner

submits a work that is at the same level with the other learners, he receives lesser grades because more is expected of him. While the other learners, whose work demonstrate their maximum efforts are given better grades. The grades could serve as motivation for more efforts for the different category of learners. While the gifted learner realises that there is a gap to fill and works harder. The other learner finds motivation in his high scores to continue to put in maximum efforts.

IMPLEMENTING ENRICHMENT GIFTED PROGRAMS IN AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

From the insight program on SBS, learners identified as gifted explained that there exists a mismatch between how they preferred to learn and how they were taught. The students indicated that they required multimodal forms of information to be able to represent what they know. Modes of communication such as drawing pictures of their interpretation, acting out their understanding in role plays, building models to represent their understanding among others. According to Munro (2019) gifted learners benefit from open ended tasks and assignments. Tasks that deal with application of learning. Higher order learning objectives in the region of analysis, evaluation and synthesis could be targeted instead of recall objectives etc. Some of the ways in which we can implement suggestions for catering to gifted learners in an inclusive classroom are:

According to Azzam (2016) Identified strategies for challenging gifted learners we must;

1. Offer the most difficult first – This strategy as presented by Azzam (2016) is excellent for working with gifted children in an inclusive classroom. It proposes that when giving work to a class of learners to do, be it class work or homework you give out the most difficult questions first. For instance, in a work of 25 questions give out the five most difficult for the entire class to complete. Students who are able to tackle the most difficult questions on the said concept are excused from that assignment and given the next concept on the curriculum to try out or given extension work which carries the concept to a higher level, while other students do the work. Competence on the most difficult questions is a demonstration of mastery on the concept. Moving on to other concepts either following the curriculum or the child’s interest and giftedness saves time, widens the child’s horizon,

develops and increases child's abilities and prevents boredom.

2. Pre-Test for volunteers – In this case after a concept is taught, the teacher could call for volunteers to do the end of chapter exercise. A score of 90 percent and above excuses the volunteers from class practice work and homework and they move to the extension work which takes the concept a little higher.

3. Prepare to take it up – This involves making available a wide range of differentiated activities that either take a concept up or down depending on how the students grasp the concept. They are optional challenge works. There are also several options through which learners can approach class work. They could use an application in their Ipad to answer the question, they could create an app, create a game. This opportunity enables the teacher to identify giftedness and allows the learners exploit their talents and giftedness.

4. Speak to students' interest – In classes such as computer or architecture, learners are allowed to tailor projects to their interest. Example, they are instructed to create a robot and individual groups or students can choose the level of complexity. The 'Ignite presentation' format, where students are instructed to create slides on their topic of interest related to the unit and present to the entire class is also another method.

5. Working together (within ability grouping)– this includes grouping gifted learners together when having group work. This ensures that there can share ideas, develop new dimensions to each other's ideas. They learn that they need to exert themselves and challenge self in order to keep up with the group. They should however not be grouped together all the time. Sometimes the groups formed should also be inclusive in order to prepare them for existence in an inclusive world.

6. Plan for tiered learning – This includes planning learning activities with multiple tiers of difficulty. This ensure that there are activities that are challenging enough to keep the gifted students occupied. This way they will not get bored and begin to act out or distract the class. This also ensures that the learners needing help can get help while the gifted children are engaged.

According to Jenny Grant Rankin in Azzam (2016) knowing the learner's emotional intensities also referred to as overexcitabilities is key in teaching gifted children. Dabrowski in Azzam

(2016) Identified five areas of excitabilities related to giftedness as; psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginational, and emotional. These over excitabilities will present in the classroom in the form of compulsive talking or organizing, restlessness, heightened sensitivity to smell or taste, insatiable curiosity or daydreaming. These excitabilities are often negatively viewed but are a key to creativity, imagination and drive.

Cox (n.d.) on Teachhub.com proposed the following methods for meeting the needs of gifted children: 1. Teachers should be well acquainted with blooms taxonomy and ensure that they utilize content that stimulate higher order learning objectives such as synthesis, analysis, evaluation and creation. This will stimulate creative thinking in the child. 2. Teachers should employ teaching strategies that utilize technology. Technology provides an opportunity for learners to explore their individuality and diverse interests in the process of learning. Take for instance the use of educative tablets that are connected to the internet. This will allow a very curious child to satisfy his curiosity on a particular subject by searching for information on the net Care should be taken however, to prevent abuse. 3. Differentiate instruction through the provision of choice boards that allow learners choose the problems they want to tackle and the activities they want to partake in. 4. Independent projects. This includes giving extra projects to gifted children after they complete classwork. Other strategies proposed are challenge learning, sending the learner temporarily to a different class that is able to drive the learner's interest and collaboration with parents ensuring that even at home the gifted child is sufficiently challenged. Out of classroom activities such as excursions are activities that can greatly help in stirring students interests and creative thinking. Providing additional reading to gifted children is also a method of engaging them, additional reading could be done either in the classroom or as homework. Tasking them on their knowledge of current events and challenging them to follow special news features on channels like CNN and write reports is also a way of ensuring they are stimulated. Engaging them in extracurricular activities such as science clubs, arts and craft clubs, music clubs, sporting activity is also a good way to ensure sufficient stimulation and engagement.

Benny and Blonder (2016) pointed out one very important issue in the education of gifted children

in an inclusive or mixed abilities classroom. They identified the need for a teacher who is intelligent and well versed in the subject matter, and who also has the right personality and attitude to be able to meet the needs of a gifted child. The educational system in Nigeria should be revised to ensure that only the best brains who fall within the upper 25th percentile of intelligence become teachers.

CONCLUSION

The goal of every school and every classroom should be that every learner should be helped to maximize their potential. The gifted learner should not be left out in this goal. Special learning centers are not sufficient to accommodate every gifted learner in the country. Not every gifted learner will have access to evaluation for a special school. The only way to ensure that all gifted learners have their gifts identified and developed in order to maximize their potentials is by ensuring that every classroom situation is designed with the gifted learner in mind and every learning facilitator is equipped to identify and cater to the needs of the gifted child.

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