Understanding Gifted Children.

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Summary

This article outlines the needs of gifted children from the perspective of guidance counsellors. Gifted students can often underachieve at school because of their frustration with the system or because of the lack of opportunities to allow them to develop their potential. This article allows guidance counsellors and educators to further their understanding of gifted children to better serve them within a school environment. Areas such as defining giftedness, how to identify a gifted student, problems that gifted students face and programmes for gifted students in Ireland will be covered.

Keywords

Gifted, Twice exceptional, Acceleration, Underachievement

Introduction

This article will look at working with gifted students from the perspective of guidance counsellors. Despite there being over 30,000 gifted students within the Irish education system they are a group that can be somewhat neglected in the overall framework. This lies largely around the argument as to whether being gifted constitutes a recognised special educational need. On the one side of this argument there are those who believe the existing curriculum and the educational system are fine as they are and have been designed for gifted students to thrive so they do not need special assistance to reach their potential. However advocates for gifted students will argue that this is a very narrow definition of what constitutes a gifted student and will believe that significant adaptations need to be made to the curriculum and the immediate educational environment to meet the needs of these students.

This article will look at important aspects of giftedness that will be helpful for guidance counsellors should they need to advise these students on any aspects of their schooling. The article will look at definitions of giftedness, characteristics of gifted children and gifted children who also have special educational needs. It will also examine the need for identification of gifted students and most importantly issues around gifted students and guidance counselling. This will include areas such as underachievement and multipotentiality and also problems that gifted children face at school and at home. Finally the article will look at gifted programmes in Ireland and resources available to students.

Defining giftedness

One of the main problems in the literature is this area is that there is little consensus around a definition of giftedness. This stems on one level from the opposing schools of thought within the nature/nurture debate. There are conflicting views as to whether intelligence is something that is genetically inherited or whether it is a product of the environment (Carroll, 1993; Gardner, 1983; Jensen, 1998; Jensen, 1998; Sternberg, 1985). Furthermore there are different opinions on whether IQ is static over a person's life or indeed if IQ is an appropriate measure of intelligence. Finally there is disagreement with what cut offs to use if a child is to be labeled gifted. Different experts argue that this can fall anywhere between the top 1% and top 15% of the population. The most recent Irish definition was published in the draft guidelines by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA, 2007). The term exceptionally able is used in the guidelines to describe students who require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for the general cohort of students. The NCCA believes that approximately 5-10% of the school population may be exceptionally able and will demonstrate very high levels of attainment in six areas listed as general intellectual ability or talent; specific academic aptitude or talent; visual and performing arts and sports; leadership ability; creative and productive thinking; mechanical ingenuity; and special abilities in empathy, understanding and negotiation.

A subsequent review of these guidelines by teachers and school principals (NCCA 2008) showed that they succeeded best in supporting school management and teachers to audit and review school policy in relation to gifted children. However, feedback also outlined that the guidelines did not give enough support in allowing teachers to differentiate curriculum.

A general consensus amongst interested parties states that students who are gifted have the potential to perform at levels beyond what may be expected for their age. Most experts (Benbow & Stanley, 1983; Kulik, 2003; Moon, 1995; Olszewski-Kubilius, 1989) agree that gifted children fall into the special educational needs category as they have different educational needs than those of a general population. As VanTassel-Baska (2003, p.174) points out:

"Gifted learners have different learning needs compared with typical learners. Therefore, curriculum must be adapted or designed to accommodate these needs."

However, in an Irish context gifted students are usually not classified as students with special educational needs. There are also problems with whether giftedness applies across the board in all subjects or whether it relates to subject ability. Historically Spearman (1904) sought out empirical tests of differences between various mental tests and school performance measures. Many of these seemingly diverse tests had strong correlations. He extracted from arrays of test intercorrelations a factor called "g" which he identified as that universal thing possessed in varying amounts by all people that is responsible for individual differences in test scores and academic performance. "G" became regarded as a symbol for general intelligence. Gifted students were perceived of as those who scored above average on IQ tests. Importantly this is a quantifiable measure not a qualitative one. Grouping students in special classes moving at an accelerated pace that contains more advanced and in depth material was seen as a way of utilising this model (see Feldhusen, 1991; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2003; Stanley, 1979).

More modern theories of giftedness look at giftedness from a different perspective. Sternberg was one of the first to question whether IQ is a reliable indicator of intelligence. He developed the model of the Triarchic Theory of Intelligence (1985). Sternberg's theory also looked at environment in relation to gifted theory. Sternberg believes that a person is successfully intelligent by virtue of how they adapt, shape and select environments. This is something that is not measured in traditional IQ tests. More recently he refers to three distinct forms of intelligence: analytic, creative and practical and suggested that giftedness was related to success in life.

The most publicised work of recent years is that of Howard Gardner who proposed the theory that the human organism possesses distinct units of mental functioning, which he labels as "intelligences". He also asserts that these separate intelligences have their own specific sets of abilities which can be observed and measured. Gardner (1983) suggested a concept of multiple intelligences including linguistic, logical/mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligence. Later he added naturalistic, spiritual and existential intelligence (Gardner, 1999).

All of this means that the field of gifted education is a changing one. There are question marks over whether IQ is a reliable measure for accepting students onto gifted programmes. There is also the idea that students are more likely to have a subject specific intelligence rather than a broad general intelligence. It is important that guidance counsellors realise that gifted students are not only those who score 100% in all their tests at school. The work of Gardner and Sternberg has demonstrated that there are different forms of intelligence and schools need to broaden their definition of giftedness in order to identify these students. It is also important to

remember that intelligence is not static over a person's lifetime and if gifted students are not given opportunities to be challenged they may struggle to fulfill their potential.

Characteristics of Gifted Children

Many gifted children present with unique characteristics that help us to identify them as gifted. From a young age children with extended vocabularies or great curiosity about how things work may show early signs of giftedness. Other characteristics are not so obvious however making it difficult to identify gifted children in many settings, including school. It is useful for guidance counsellors to be familiar with and be able to recognise traits of giftedness that can be used to help the classroom teacher. Clark (1988) presents some general characteristics of gifted children.

(These are typical factors stressed by educational authorities as being indicative of giftedness. Obviously, no child is outstanding in all characteristics.)

1. Shows superior reasoning powers and marked ability to handle ideas; can generalize readily from specific facts and can see subtle relationships; has outstanding problem-solving ability.
2. Shows persistent intellectual curiosity; asks searching questions; shows exceptional interest in the nature of man and the universe.
3. Has a wide range of interests, often of an intellectual kind; develops one or more interests to considerable depth.
4. Is markedly superior in quality and quantity of written and/or spoken vocabulary; is interested in the subtleties of words and their uses.
5. Reads avidly and absorbs books well beyond his or her years.
6. Learns quickly and easily and retains what is learned; recalls important details, concepts and principles; comprehends readily.
7. Shows insight into arithmetical problems that require careful reasoning and grasps mathematical concepts readily.
8. Shows creative ability or imaginative expression in such things as music, art, dance, drama; shows sensitivity and finesse in rhythm, movement, and bodily control.
9. Sustains concentration for lengthy periods and shows outstanding responsibility and independence in classroom work.
10. Sets realistically high standards for self; is self-critical in evaluating and correcting his or her own efforts.
11. Shows initiative and originality in intellectual work; shows flexibility in thinking and considers problems from a number of viewpoints.
12. Observes keenly and is responsive to new ideas.
13. Shows social poise and an ability to communicate with adults in a mature way.
14. Gets excitement and pleasure from intellectual challenge; shows an alert and subtle sense of humor.

Twice exceptional children

In the past few years there has been a growth in the number of students who are considered twice exceptional which is also known as **dual exceptionality**. Such students have been identified as gifted but also present with some sort of disability Children can be gifted when they also have a learning difficulty or physical disabilities, vision, hearing or speech impairments, autism spectrum disorder or emotional disabilities.

The most common forms of dual exceptionality are gifted students with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Aspergers Syndrome. Instances of visual and auditory disability may also occur.

Twice exceptional children are very difficult to identify and can be misunderstood within the education system. Often they can present as 'bright children' who are not trying hard enough or as a child with learning difficulties who has no exceptional ability. In these cases there is a masking effect where the child's giftedness is making it difficult to see the learning difficulty and the child's deficits make it almost impossible to identify the giftedness. The child is this case can be very frustrated as they are sometimes viewed as 'lazy' or 'careless' yet they are actually working so hard that the teacher cannot see the learning difficulty. Consequently twice exceptional children can lose a lot of self confidence as they are never perceived as good at anything even though they might have high ability

These students defy the notion of 'global giftedness', a phrase that denotes ability or talent in all academic areas. Children who are both gifted with a learning difficulty simply exhibit remarkable talents and strengths in one area and disabling weaknesses in others. These children are often under-identified in gifted and talented populations. They are normally identified through an educational psychologist and benefit greatly from attending gifted programmes by giving the students an opportunity to focus on what they are good at rather than their learning difficulty.

Need for Identification of Gifted Students

The Programme for International Assessment (PISA) is an initiative of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). First implemented in 2000, it examines the extent to which students from various participating countries are able to demonstrate key competencies in reading, mathematics and science (Cosgrave, Shiel, Sofroniou, Zastrutski & Short, 2005; OECD, 2001; OECD, 2004). Ireland's participation in PISA prompts widespread national media coverage of outcomes and results. One of the main goals of Ireland's involvement with PISA comes from a perspective of achieving equity in educational outcomes reflecting the country's egalitarian philosophy. This leads to a larger focus on looking for reasons of low achievement rather than focusing on the results of the high achieving students. In any case the results from PISA 2012 are not that encouraging from an Irish perspective in relation to gifted students. Ireland's Mean score in Print Mathematics of 501.5 is significantly above the average across OECD countries. However students at the 90^{th} and 95^{th} percentiles in Ireland have Mean scores of 609.8 and 639.6 which are significantly below than their counterparts in other comparative OECD countries with the exception of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland and the United States.

Furthermore, Ireland has only 10.7% of students performing at the higher proficiency levels (at/above Level 5) in Mathematics. This compares unfavorably with Germany and Poland at 17.5% and 16.7% respectively and with China which has 55.4% of students operating at or above a level 5 proficiency in Mathematics. The trend continues in Science where Ireland has 10.8% of students performing at or above level 5 compared to Germany (12.2%), Finland (17.1%) and China (27.2%). The author's experience is that low performance could be related to the lack of resources available to gifted students at a school level. While some schools will do their best to provide resources to high ability students through differentiated curriculum in class and after school activities, it is the experience of the author that in the majority of cases there is no specific provision for these students at school level. In this environment these children will not fulfill their obvious potential.

One of the problems lies with the fact that there is little or no provision within teacher training programmes to work specifically with gifted students. The emphasis is on students at the other end of the spectrum with differing educational needs. Given that there is no provision for special needs teachers to work with gifted students then there is little or no motivation for trainee teachers to be given techniques to work with gifted students as the schools will have very few resources available to them once they start their teaching.

Gifted Students and Guidance Counselling

In a recent American study of school guidance counselling college courses (Peterson, 2011), there was little evidence of any training in the characteristics, social and emotional development or counselling needs of high ability students. The prevailing attitude there seems to be, that bright students did not really need guidance counsellors for much of anything, because they are smart enough to figure things out for themselves. Unfortunately, this attitude seems to be quite pervasive. According to Lovecky (1993) and Peterson (2003), the common myth among educators, counsellors, school psychologists, and even mental health professionals, is that gifted and talented students do not require any additional guidance or special assistance because of their high abilities. The author would believe that this situation may occur in Ireland with high ability students who perform well in school being encouraged to apply for courses with the highest points. Courses such as Medicine and Law can be appealing for high ability students but the author believes that it is often the case that gifted students are encouraged to apply for these courses because of the high points associated with them.

Both Cross (2004) and Silverman (1993) asserted that proactive counselling programs for gifted and talented students are invaluable because of the positive effects on their psychological and social development and because support and guidance can help these students find their way through an education system that is not necessarily designed to maximize or promote their success.

Social and emotional difficulties may arise because of gifted children's uneven development, with students being academically advanced but socially operating at the same level as their age peers. This can lead to problems in teenage years. Academically, the intellectual abilities of gifted students differ both quantitatively and qualitatively from average children (Cottrel &

Shaughnessy, 2005). They learn at a faster pace, think or process more deeply, and require less repetition or practice to master assigned material, thus, warranting greater educational challenge in their coursework (Coleman & Cross, 2001; Silverman, 2002; VanTassel-Baska, 1998).

However, if left academically unchallenged, these students can become bored and exhibit disruptive behaviors. Lack of goals, motivation, or direction, and failure to develop self-regulatory strategies can impact the academic performance of high ability students, for a variety of reasons (Siegle & McCoach, 2002). Gifted and talented learners may also feel pressure to live up to the expectations of parents, teachers, and other significant adults in their lives and many have a fear of failure, experience frustration, and underachieve in school (Schuler, 2002; Silverman, 1993).

Guidance counsellors can be supportive by increasing their awareness of the academic and social needs of gifted students. Reading articles like this is a start but guidance counsellors should also avail of any opportunities to further knowledge about gifted students either through in-service training or attending conferences in this area.

Underachievement and multipotentiality

There are many reasons why high ability students may fulfill their potential. The following section will discuss two of the main reasons why this might occur. This includes underachievement where a gifted student may not achieve to the level of their ability and multipotentiality where a gifted student might have ability in many subjects but is unable to find the area that gives the most satisfaction.

Underachievement

Gifted students are vulnerable to underachievement, defined as school attainment considerably below their ability level (Neihart et al., 2002). In this instance students will always perform lower than is expected of them.

Why do gifted students underachieve?

- Social isolation
- Pressure to conform
- Lack of appropriate challenge
- Family dynamics
- Learning or behavioral difficulties
- Lack of goals and direction

(Colangelo, Kerr, Christensen, & Maxey, 1993; Neihart et al., 2002; Peterson & Colangelo, 1996; Reis, 1998;Rimm, 1997).

Multipotentiality

Gifted students can have difficulties with being good at many things but also, being undecided about which career direction to follow, leads to problems.

Rysiew, Shore, and Leeb (1998) outlined some of the main concerns in addressing this area. Students find it hard to narrow their choices to one career since they have so many equally viable options. These students may also suffer from perfectionism as they search for the perfect career. Parents and teachers can often influence them in a negative fashion by insisting that they choose college courses linked to status and high earning potential.

A review of research and writings on career development of gifted students recommends the following for guidance counsellors. (Rysiew, Shore, & Leeb, 1998):

1. Remind students that they do not have to limit themselves to one career.
2. Use leisure activities as a way to continually develop areas of abilities and interest, apart from one's career.
3. Use career counselling as a value-based activity, exploring broad categories of life satisfaction.
4. Emphasize peer discussions and group work with other multipotential youth so that one can see that he/she is not alone with concerns.

Potential problems for gifted students

Gifted students like any other students may experience problems at school in various areas. The following section discusses potential areas that are more common in gifted students that guidance counsellors should look out for when they are meeting with high ability students.

Asynchrony

Asynchronous development refers to intellectual skills being advanced while social and motor skills are age appropriate (Silverman, 1993). This is a phenomenon noted particularly with highly gifted children. To help understand this concept, Silverman distinguishes between emotional needs, emotional development, and emotional immaturity. A child may have the emotional needs appropriate for their chronological age, e.g., 4, yet have emotional awareness that is qualitatively different from that of its age mates due to greater cognitive awareness.

Peer Relations

Gifted students may need different peer groups according to their different interests. Gifted youngsters may prefer the company of adults or older children: alternatively, they may take refuge in books (Webb, 1993). Delisle (1992) and Silverman (1993) also cite conformity and the hiding of talents in order to be accepted, as an issue. Further, the more highly gifted the child, the more limited the selection of children available with whom to form friendships.

Perfectionism

Gifted children often have high expectations of themselves due to being able to perceive an ideal with an accompanying desire to attain that ideal (Webb, 1993). The student who knows quality may spend considerable time trying to achieve it, and sense failure if they fall short (Schmitz &Galbraith, 1985). Gifted individuals may, however, need assistance with balancing choices about what they should pursue with such drive and also with issues relating to self-concept and performance.

Avoidance of Risk-Taking

As part of being able to do well at school, gifted youngsters can often perceive potential problems. This can lead to low risk-taking behaviours, particularly if there is a perceived risk of failure, or a related risk to an individual's self-concept. Underachievement can result, as can obsessive indecision (Delisle, 1992; Webb, 1993). Frey (1991) notes this is particularly prevalent at the onset of adolescence due to becoming more aware of the repercussions of taking risks and a tendency to choose only what they will be successful in.

Excessive Self-Criticism

Self-criticism occurs when an individual perceives themselves as falling short of their ideals of achievement. This can give rise to depression as a result of anger and disappointment with oneself (Genshaft, Greenbaum, & Borovsky, 1995; Webb, 1993). This is coupled with a difficulty in accepting criticism from others (Delisle, 1992; Silverman, 1993). As the bar is typically quite high for the gifted and the opportunities to develop potential are relatively limited, it is likely that such disappointments and frustration will be prevalent. Guidance counsellors can be helpful here to ensure that gifted students set realistic targets for themselves and encourage them to achieve these standards.

Gifted Programmes in Ireland

Dublin City University formulated an ambitious plan to cater for and work with gifted students. In 1992 with the aid of CTY at Johns Hopkins University a Talent Search was introduced to identify high ability students for the first gifted summer programme run at Dublin City University organised by the Irish Centre for Talented Youth (CTYI). To date some 45,000 Irish students aged 6 to 17 have participated in a Talent Search run by CTYI to identify high ability students. Letters are written to all schools in the country to ask them to identify students who have scored at or above the 95th percentile on a standardised test. As of 2012, up to 70% of schools in the country have participated in the Talent Search. Following the talent search, qualifying students are asked to attend an awards ceremony at Dublin City University to recognise their achievement.

Benefits recorded from Talent Search include students gaining a better understanding of their academic abilities (Brody 1998) and students identified through talent searches reporting higher educational and career aspirations (Van Tassel-Baska, 1989; Wilder & Casserly, 1988). Olszewski-Kubilius & Grant (1996) documented that students who participate in talent searches are more likely to participate in academic extracurricular activities and to pursue more rigorous academic courses and careers in the future.

Currently the only formal programme for gifted students in Ireland is the Irish Centre for Talented Youth (CTYI). CTYI was started at Dublin City University in 1992, with the following aims:

- To identify through national and international talent searches pre-college children who reason extremely well mathematically and/or verbally;
- To provide talented youth both from Ireland and overseas with challenging and invigorating coursework and related educational opportunities through an annual summer programme, and on Saturday classes during the school year;

- To provide teacher training and support services to schools participating in the CTYI programme;
- To assist parents in advancing talented students by providing access to information and resources;
- To research and evaluate talent development and the effectiveness of programme models and curriculum provision.

As part of its mission CTYI, www.dcu.ie/ctyi, runs Saturday courses for primary school children at various centres around the country. These courses would traditionally be in non curricular subjects giving students the opportunity to study topics that they would not usually be exposed to in school. Examples of subjects on Saturday classes include Forensic Science, Zoology, Science of Tomorrow, Engineering, Computer Programming, Journalism, Legal Studies and Psychology.

Feldhusen and Sokol (1982) identify some key cognitive needs of talented students addressed by Saturday programmes. The gifted must try to acquire a broader store of knowledge, learn new research methods, and exercise self-direction in learning. Saturday programmes provide the opportunity for gifted and talented youth to engage in some in-depth study in areas of interest, with a curriculum that can be enriched and accelerated to fit students' needs. Saturday programmes should offer a wealth of information (**enrichment**) at a fast pace (**acceleration**). Feldhusen and Ruckman (1988) suggest that an effective Saturday programme should run between a seven and twelve week period, with two to three hours instruction per week. This allows sufficient time for detailed pursuit of a topic for any significant project involvement. Feldhusen and Wyman (1980) believe that a college or university campus is an excellent location for a Saturday programme. College or university lecture theatres provide an excellent setting for the classes and the professional academic environment may serve as a career stimulus for the talented adolescent. The CTYI Saturday classes in Dublin take place on the campus of Dublin City University and the regional classes take place in third level institutions around the country.

Courses given would normally be in subjects that would be offered at third level and are taught by subject experts in the particular area. The teachers would usually be part time lecturers or postgraduate students from the third level institution hosting the course. In this way CTYI students have access to third level facilities and teachers who have particular knowledge in their area of interest. Typically in primary school these students have one teacher for all subject areas and have little or no opportunity to develop their knowledge in specific academic areas.

Another out of school programme option for gifted students is summer programmes. CTYI run three week residential summer programmes for high ability students at Dublin City University for secondary school students. Examples of summer course subjects that secondary school students participate in include Biomedical Diagnostics, Theoretical Physics, Criminology, Corporate Business, Social Psychology, International Relations and Writing for Life. The variety and depth of subjects offered is important because although Irish students have teachers in different subject areas at second level it is often the case that either the subject might not be challenging enough for them (see Kulik, 2003; Moon, Feldhusen & Dillon, 1994; Vaughan, Feldhusen & Asher, 1991) or in some instances the students may excel in a subject that is not

offered at secondary school (see Benbow & Stanley, 1983; Olszewski-Kubilius & Lee, 2004; Olszewski-Kubilius, 1989).

Summer programmes for gifted students may vary in length and focus but most have several components in common: an accelerated and enriched curriculum; dedicated staff; peer interaction with others of similar ability; and a supportive environment (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2003). Coleman & Cross (1988) report that some high ability children report to feeling different to others so placing them on programmes with like minded individuals may enhance feelings of acceptance. Enerson (1993) found that summer programmes may help to meet gifted students academic, social and psychological needs.

In 1993 CTYI ran the first summer programme for gifted children in secondary school using students identified from the Talent Search. In the first year of the programme 133 Irish students attended. The programme has proved to be a successful outlet for high ability students and was expanded to include primary school students in 1997. In the academic year 2011-12 over 5,000 students aged 6 to 17 participated in programmes run by CTYI.

Other resources

In February 2008 www.giftedkids.ie was launched as an advocacy and support website for parents and educators of exceptionally able and twice exceptional children in Ireland. It was unique in that it was the first website to actively meet the needs of parents and teachers of gifted children from an Irish perspective. Run by a small voluntary group of parent and teacher advocates, the site currently acts as a signpost to online resources and has a huge range available for parents, teachers and children. One of the most active areas of the site is the online community forum where teachers and parents can share strategies, offer support and seek advice in a secure and supportive environment. In 2010 the Giftedkids team, with the support of Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, the National Centre for Technology in Education and the Centre for Talented Youth Ireland launched a highly successful series of free online webinars aimed at parents and teachers. Since its launch Giftedkids has grown in scope and reach. In 2008 Giftedkids had a total of 29,309 visitors viewing 253,743 pages; by 2011 this had risen to a total of 183,348 visitors viewing 645,165 pages. Although Giftedkids has an Irish emphasis, its web stats show a global reach with increasing visitor numbers from the U.S.

More recently www.giftedireland.ie was formed to help parents advocate for their children and to form local support groups to enable them to communicate and collaborate. The main aims of this group are to help parents find support and advice in their local communities; to develop a strong and unified voice of advocacy on behalf of gifted children; to help and support those involved in the care and education of gifted children; and to raise awareness of the unique social, emotional and academic needs of gifted children and adults. This group has had great success in setting up support groups for parents all over the country.

Gifted and Talented Network Ireland was founded in January 2011. The main goal of the network was to build a support network for parents of exceptionally able/gifted children and to advocate for school-based recognition and intervention for gifted children. Although GTNetwork

is open to parents and teachers, it was envisaged in the long run that teachers might seek support specific to their classroom work. Teachers who are interested in networking specifically with other teachers can register with www.teachireland.org

For the last few years a Gifted Education Awareness Week has been organised. This event involves mailing information leaflets and posters to schools in order to raise awareness among teachers, both primary and secondary, of the educational needs of gifted children and organising advocacy events in this period for interested parties.

A summary of key points raised

- Standardized tests can be used to identify gifted students. In this case gifted students will normally be operating at two standard deviations above the Mean of these tests which would place them at or above the 95th percentile. It is important to remember that most gifted students will achieve this level in a particular subject area and may not be performing in the gifted range in all subjects.
- Gifted students can be identified either through general academic ability or in specific areas of interest.
- Only using standardized tests to identify gifted students can lead to under representation of high ability students from lower socio economic backgrounds. In these cases teacher nomination or student interest in the material can be used to support the nomination of a student for a gifted programme.
- Gifted students should be given opportunities in areas that they are interested in rather than a one size fits all approach. There is no benefit for a verbally talented student to be given extra enrichment classes in the mathematics field or vice versa.
- Curriculum must be differentiated for gifted students to allow them to gain a deeper understanding of the material. They should be encouraged to question their own understanding of subjects in a more analytical way rather than learning off pre-prepared answers.
- If a gifted student is given an extra project to complete to challenge them more, then, time must be allocated to them to allow them to complete it and their work should be read by subject experts so as to give them appropriate feedback.
- Gifted students should be encouraged to apply for university courses in which they are interested rather than pushing them into high points options.
- Extracurricular competitions in fields such as science, engineering, technology or writing are useful outlets for gifted children.
- Gifted students do better when they get the chance to work with other students of similar ability.
- Gifted students can have difficulties with non gifted peers if they do not share the same interests.
- Gifted students should be encouraged to take risks with their work to delve more deeply into topics. In these instances they should be clearly told that this will not affect their grade as some students are reluctant to take risks for fear of failure.
- While gifted students by their nature are academically more advanced than their peers many will not be as advanced socially and they should be given opportunities to participate in activities with children of the same age.

Conclusion

This article outlines some of the main areas relating to gifted children and guidance counselling. It is important for guidance counsellors to be familiar with some of the issues that gifted children face inside or outside of school. The main criticism that gifted students have in relation to guidance counselling is that they are often encouraged to aim for courses with high points or courses that have a particular prestige or status rather than courses which may be more of interest to them (O'Reilly, 2010). The problems that some gifted children face at school in terms of difficulty with peer relations, perfectionism or heightened sensitivity debunk the myth that gifted students can solve their own problems and do not need guidance at any level. It is important that gifted students understand that there is a place for them within the existing school system and that there are programmes outside of school that they can attend to further their interests. Most importantly gifted students need to understand that they are a special group in their own right and that they receive guidance counselling and support in relation to their ability to enable them to reach their full potential.

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