

How to Make Gifted Education Creative

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After reading numerous texts dedicated to the education of the gifted (which mostly referred to the definition of giftedness, identifying gifted students, the development of gifted programmes, the implementation of such programs and the evaluation of their effects), I came across a paper which attempts to offer a comprehensive analysis in this field and establishes that gifted education needs to strengthen conceptual foundations. I agree with D. Ambrose and congratulate him on his courage to risk linking what is unrelated in order to introduce innovation and create a new order in this field. To what extent the given proposals relate only to gifted education, or whether their implementation could be wider and refer to education in general, we will discuss later. In any case we were given a reasoned and well-argued text in which the author skilfully draws conclusions and forms questions which are relevant to the subject on the basis of the analysis of achievements from various sciences.

It seems to me that with his article “Borrowing insights from other disciplines to strengthen the conceptual foundations for gifted education”, D. Ambrose tried to make gifted education creative. His suggestions about the ways in which “scholars can shed new light on high ability” could be commented on in the light of the explanatory power of the chosen approach. His proposal for interdisciplinary inquiry shows us that the phenomenon of gifted education is not yet sufficiently based on the basic resources which various sciences offer in the current phase of its development. What could the influence on gifted education be if there was a better understanding of the phenomenon which is expected from integrated study? It is unlikely that cultural differences could be eliminated in this process.

On the other side, if research and its results are freed from significant characteristics of context, by being placed on a higher and more general level, the question is raised as to what extent such findings would be usable?

Firstly, we need the establishment of an interdisciplinary perspective towards the topic of gifted education.

Comment could start from the gifted education phenomenon which is linked to high ability. One direction in the expansion of the approach to giftedness and creativity might be intercultural, from academic practice to the educational goals and philosophy of education. What is current today in the education of those with high abilities, those with promise, those who want to be highly educated, those whose goal is to become leaders, those who are the most needed in their local environment, and those who can and will be supported by their environments, from education to employment in appropriate jobs and positions? On the level of the state and the educational and school regulative, as well as in those sciences which deal with the education of the gifted, the question is posed differently: how should we support the giftedness, talents and creativity of all students or each individual to develop and

express, to the optimal extent, what they are best at, where their strengths lie, and what they can contribute most to the progress of his surrounding and humanity.

The multidisciplinary approach to studying gifted education, which refers to the lowest level of integration, could be compared with multiculturalism in education (Джуришич-Боянович & Максич, 2007). Politicians have given up on social multiculturalism in Europe, admitting its failure, while this idea is still present in school curriculums. Is the destiny of multidisciplinary research, which the current scientific community is aware of, similar? What does the transdisciplinary approach and the highest level of integration offer us in terms of the further development of gifted education? Does advocacy of the transdisciplinary approach and the highest level of integration in the scientific interpretation of gifted education only follow other global processes, such as the creation and domination of transnational businesses and companies? Globalisation is perceived as an essential process which develops independently of the aspirations of individuals, social groups and nations. Is that the case? Are all kinds of talents such that gifted individuals behave like leaders and become leaders?

How can we “guide tomorrow's brightest minds toward productive aspirations”? The most important aspects of gifted education and creativity studies are related to the development of leadership talent and identity formation among the gifted. Whatever we do in school even if we do not have any educational philosophy in mind, even when we claim that we do not rely on any theory or philosophy of education, that standpoint presents a certain philosophy as well. Better quality studies, action research, case studies, or any other attempt at conceived engagement in gifted education and education in general which has its goals, has at its base certain

assumptions about child development and capacities, ways of acting and the achievement of planned goals. The same applies to those who carry out research. I think that we must be satisfied with fragmented concepts of giftedness like the multidimensional concept of culture because of the present level of human knowledge. For now!

D. Ambrose adheres to the position that the concepts and definitions of giftedness are essential as a methodological frame to confine the field which is being observed in order to gain meaningful and relevant data in the implemented research. However, that does not mean that the researched phenomenon and its relations can be reduced only to what the choice and decision of the researcher were, nor does it mean that ‘random’, accidental or any other insights the researcher came to, regardless of whether they are presented as claims (that something is) or negations (that something is not) are unimportant. The use of metaphor as an exploratory tool and thematic integrator for interdisciplinary work is the idea which I like most. It seems to me that this is the most promising way because it offers a bridge between what is known and what is not known as well as between those who do know something and those who do not. Great writers have convinced us of the power and strength of metaphor and scientists are yet to use it. The integrative approach includes the innovation which metaphor can bring.

I am familiar with the idea about the domination of the American perspective in gifted education in the world, or at least in the literature which is accessible in the English language. Why the gifted are educated pursuant to this model can easily be explained by the continuum of the USA's global influence, from the story of the American dream which every committed individual can achieve, to the fact about the American state as a policeman who shapes

the world according to his interests and controls it in the aim of protecting his interests. In order to exit from the magic circle of the true values of one side - regardless of how universal they are - we should observe the issue from various sides, and in this regard D. Ambrose is indeed right. Various points of view already exist. What is needed is readiness to take them into consideration. The results of international research present possible sources for various perspectives. For instance, on the basis of the World Values Study (WVS) a cultural map of the world was constructed in which many differences between certain states and entities become clearer (Inglehart, & Baker, 2000; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

Support for imagination in childhood could be considered not only as a desirable precondition for the development of creative orientation and creative behaviour in adulthood, but also as the driving force behind further social development. The analysis of the data on valuing child imagination collected in the World Values Survey showed that the wealthiest European societies and social groups tend to value child imagination more highly (Maksić & Pavlović, 2013).

The most important variables for the status of child imagination at the aggregate level were cultural-historical heritage and the influence of social patterns defined by the dominant religion. Data about valuing child imagination among the citizens of Serbia, France, Germany and Great Britain indicated a low level of support for imagination in comparison with other educational goals, but the social elites of those countries evaluated imagination significantly more than other categories of citizens. The social elite in Serbia had small chances of supporting child imagination and creativity, in contrast to the other three aforementioned countries, because it was not actively included in the political life nor was it of interest to politics (Maksić & Pavlović, 2009).

D. Ambrose stresses the importance of ethics in gifted education. Is high intelligence ethical or are such abilities beyond ethics, which the previous history of humankind has convinced us many times? Ethics is a matter of norms and personal development, and gifted education, just like any form of education, is only one of the factors which shape personal ethics. Is the subject of ethics in gifted education real on the global level because it occurs within the same culture in which a given leader – if that is his responsibility alone - can make an unethical choice, or vice versa? Can an ethical leader resist contextual evil which, as the result of a certain set of circumstances, occurs at a given moment? Is something evil from the point of view of one, both or several opposing sides? As an example we can cite the bombing of Serbia (1999) in the name of a higher cause: to prevent human catastrophe. Who was ethical, or whose leaders were ethical in this case? Between ethics and politics, it is well known who wins. How can politics become gifted and creative in achieving the progress of people and nations?

The position that there is a risk of the cognitive elite exerting influence on others on the basis of unearned merit deserves attention too. I am not sure whether it is possible to recognize such a situation when it occurs or just before it occurs, therefore something remedial or preventive could be undertaken. The only thing we can be sure of is that such things do happen. If the surrounding opposition is aware that weak minds have been put in positions of power, there is no force which could make that public (except perhaps the media) and change the situation (the idea of big brother, who sees, knows and can do everything is implied). The idea of big brother is exceptionally dangerous, even if he is the most clever and ethical of all people in the world! The problem of societies in transition is more severe, because their social elites are socially ineffective (Maksić & Pavlović, 2012). On the basis of the WVS findings it

was concluded that the social elite in transitional Serbia was not interested in those aspects of work which would facilitate leadership, self-actualisation and creativity which caused doubt regarding its authenticity and power to carry out its social role.

The most valuable part of D. Ambrose's paper are recommendations for the expansion and strengthening of interdisciplinary work in gifted education, not a very popular idea among scientists and researchers who are aware of the limitations of their work, and very necessary to the teachers and education practice to which it refers. Finding the right ratio in what is recommended represents the distinctive characteristic of creative individuals which is also recognised in the article. Not only could we "clarify and strengthen the conceptual foundations for gifted education by going beyond psychology and education to explore theory and research in other disciplines", but such a task is essential for the further development of this field. There are numerous anecdotes about how some

elite and influential creators had bad experiences in school, and research shows that there are creative children among school underachievers and failures even from elementary school (Maksić, 2010).

In sum, it is obvious that educational support for the development of students' individual capacities, talents and creativity demands continuous changes in education around world. Does gifted education add up solely to the cognitive aspect if the significance of the complexity theory of intelligence is emphasised? Individual development and education are two general subjects with which social sciences deal; therefore gifted education has, by its nature, the need for an interdisciplinary approach. The use of complexity theory is a good idea, but one on a very conceptual level, while the use of cognitive science is already present in research into giftedness and gifted education. The advantages which are ascribed to interdisciplinary research could be linked to any problem in education and not only to gifted education.

The offered text which proposes a new approach to the problem of the conceptual foundations for gifted education could become a seminal paper, as was Sternberg's (1985) article about implicit theories of intelligence, creativity, and wisdom. We met many controversies in the interpretation of human capacities, with which the author deals in his work. I share D. Ambrose's belief that what is known about high ability in the frame of various scientific disciplines can be of use to researchers and theoreticians in the field of gifted education and creative studies. I would like to accentuate one more impression about the quality of the text and its messages to scientists and practitioners for insightful and meaningful collaboration on the issue. The article is written in fresh language which has a scientific base, but is also journalistically attractive. We can take it as the first step in fruitful interchange.

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