

Chapter 2

Rethinking Inclusion of Gifted and Twice-Exceptional Children

Eleni Bonti

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4347-1828>

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Maria Sofologi

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0380-2220>

University of Ioannina, Greece

ABSTRACT

In the chapter, the complex nature of giftedness and twice-exceptionality is being addressed, with the emphasis given on the challenges these two conditions pose upon the whole age spectrum of these individuals (i.e., from childhood to adolescence and adulthood). More precisely, as the literature suggests, these children often demonstrate socioemotional difficulties or challenging behaviours in classroom settings. Hence, the emphasis in the current chapter is given to several intervention strategies that teachers might utilize for effectively dealing with challenging behaviours of gifted and twice-exceptional children with specific reference to the school environment.

INTRODUCTION

Various definitions of ‘giftedness’ have been provided in the relevant literature, which shares the underlying conception that “gifted” students manifest high intelligence or a specific talent (or both), either in a specific domain or across a whole range of domains (Monks et al., 2000). In earlier years, giftedness was diagnosed based on a high level of Intelligence (Spearman’s ‘g’ factor of general intelligence) (Simonton, 1997). More recent definitions of giftedness have incorporated various other domains of intelligence or personality characteristics. Examples of such ‘multi-dimensional’ models are; Gardner’s (1983) ‘Multiple Intelligences Model’, Renzulli’s (1978, 2005) ‘Three Ring Model’ of high ability, and Gagne’s (2004) ‘Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent’ (Beckmann & Minnaert, 2018). Finally, the following variables have also been included in more recent conceptualizations of giftedness:

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1) superior intelligence level, 2) superiority in the academic field, 3) leadership skills, 4) creativity and 5) artistic skills (Eren et al, 2018).

Alternatively, the UAE Inspection Framework (2015-2016) described gifted students as ‘*students who own untrained and spontaneously-expressed exceptional natural ability in one or more domains of human ability*’ (e.g. intellectual, creative, social or physical abilities). In addition, a talented student is described as “*a student who has been able to transform his/her ‘giftedness’ into exceptional performance*”, who may also “*demonstrate exceptional levels of competence in the specific domains of human ability*” (p. 119).

However, up to date, there is a consensus among researchers that gifted and/or talented (g/t) students constitute a severely heterogeneous population, who manifest high intellectual abilities and/or talent in several domains (e.g. cognitive, creative, artistic, etc.), but might also exhibit multiple interpersonal characteristics (Monks and Mason, 2000).

Although g/t students usually possess exceptional potential, they may often underachieve. Therefore, recently, a newly recognized group of learners, with both learning difficulties and academic strengths or talents, known as ‘twice-exceptional’ learners, has emerged. These students have co-existing diagnoses of both Special Education Needs and, at the same time, they have been formally identified as Gifted/Talented. As with the concept of giftedness, the status of twice-exceptionality has also puzzled researchers in terms of how it should be defined (Gilman et al, 2013, as cited in Grigorenko, 2020). Baldwin (2015) has proposed one of the definitions that have received substantial consensus among twenty-six organizations supporting the research and educational needs of this population. According to this working definition, “*Twice-exceptional individuals evidence exceptional ability and disability, which results in a unique set of circumstances. Their exceptional ability may dominate, hiding their disability; their disability may dominate, hiding their exceptional ability; each may mask the other so neither is recognized or addressed*” (p. 212).

The most common co-diagnosis with giftedness in the U.S. is that of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), i.e. a significant discrepancy between a student’s level of ability and his/her performance (National Association for Gifted Children-NAGC, 2010). Nevertheless, more recent studies have revealed that these co-occurrences of gifts/talents and disabilities are not limited to a particular type of NDD (e.g. ASD, SLD, etc.), but are phenomena that have been observed across a wide spectrum of developmental disabilities (Grigorenko, 2020).

As described in DSM–5 (APA, 2013), Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDD) include Intellectual Disabilities, Communication Disorders, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Specific Learning Disorder (SLD) and Motor Disorders. NDD comprise a group of clinical symptoms and conditions that usually emerge by the age of five years in a 5-9% percentage of children and accompany the individual for the rest of his/her life. NDDs often impair the person’s quality of life, since they negatively affect almost every aspect of his/her development and functionality, on a personal, academic, social and professional level (Lamsal et al., 2020). Due to the social and emotional difficulties, individuals with NDD often encounter the possibility of developing challenging and or antisocial behaviours that increase significantly, and, in many cases, leads to delinquency (Hughes, 2015).

Since 1960, in the USA, ADHD has been identified as one of the most common NDD diagnoses in children (Smith, 2017). As regards the cognitive/learning profiles of children with ADHD, several commonly known cognitive deficiencies usually create barriers to their academic development. These deficiencies are strongly connected to an inability in developing efficient problem-solving skills, accomplish future goals and in sustaining attention and visual scanning, as well as to a reduced ‘flexibility’ (Song,

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