

ADAPTED EDUCATION FOR GIFTED CHILDREN

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Abstract: Giftedness is attributed to a combination of factors coming from two directions: natural factors, hereditary factor, which is doubled by education, the two factors are mutually self-determinate. Gifted and in particular those from early age need some type of doubled requirement for some type of tolerance incentive purposes. It is therefore necessary that the gifted children be helped to do well in school, by the activities that reward their effort and expectations measure to determine thus be successful. The safest way in this regard is the differential treatment based on internal possibilities of gifted children, interests and skills in order to express their area of "excellence". We propose in this paper a comprehensive program tailored for gifted children, educational intervention strategies and methods adapted gifted children, to contribute to their school success. This programme proposes an enriched curriculum. This enriched curriculum has final aim: to stimulate logical, enhancing creativity, self-realization, increase self-esteem, based on detailed properties of the theory and practice efficiency targets relevant and satisfactory results adapted gifted children capabilities.

Key words: gifted, comprehensiv programme, formative strategies, enriched curriculum, excellence

1. Instructive-Educational strategies for the gifted

Successful instructive-educational strategies are pedagogic determinations which contribute to the school success of the gifted. The teacher-trainer² helps a child solve problems and tasks according to his outstanding abilities, when a real change in the education process is wanted and when it is made through learning methods adapted to the style of the gifted. These abilities are more complex from one grade to the other³. In its turn, school success brings about deep changes in the personality of the gifted. The relationship between pedagogic actions with beneficial effect on the mental configuration of the gifted involves encoding the pedagogic objectives in a system of actions and individualized, concrete, accessible didactic operation⁴. Passion for a certain educational area develops in direct relationship with the results obtained. *The personalized training programme of the gifted* is a set of

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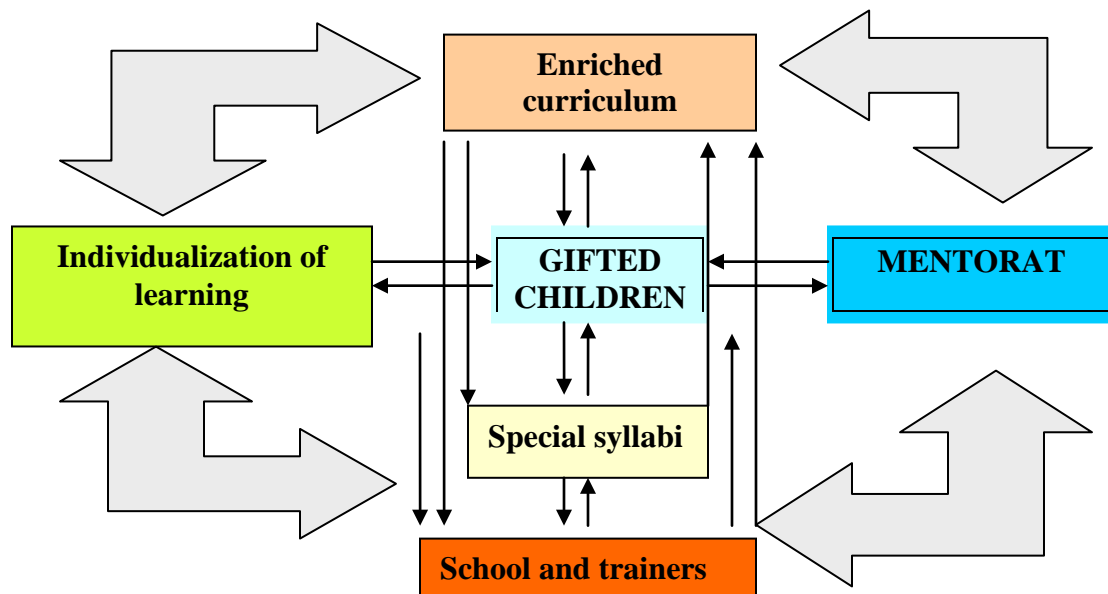
²JL Roberts Teachers of gifted secondary students: what makes them effective. In: Dixon FA and Moon SM (eds.) *The Handbook of Secondary Gifted Education*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press, 2006, pp. 567–580.

³James H. Borland, *Issues and Practices in the Identification and Education of Gifted Students From Under-represented Groups*, The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented University of Connecticut 2131 Hillside Road Unit 3007 Storrs, CT 06269-3007

⁴E.S. Richert, Excellence with justice in identification and programming. In N.Colangelo & G. A. Davis (Eds.), *Handbook of gifted education* (3rd ed., pp.146-158). Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2004.

methodological elements combined objectively to achieve positive results in increasing the efficiency of didactic activities with gifted pre-schoolers and pupils. *The personalized training programme of the gifted* contains mostly student centred methods. It is a programme aimed for the development of children according to their innate giftedness. *The personalized training programme of the gifted* has a flexible structure and it can be adapted to any age, level of study (from beginners to advanced) and to any subject of study. This programme tries to link properly the outstanding abilities of the gifted to efficient instructive-educational means. It also gives the opportunity to access alternative learning methodologies. The components of the experimental training programme *The personalized training programme of the gifted* are: enriched curriculum, individualized training and tutoring activities, all taking place simultaneously. The aim is to help the gifted evolve in the direction of their giftedness. One should take into account certain parameters connected to the formative stages of the intervention programme when implementing it (according to the activity grid presented in table no 1 below).

Figure no1. *The formative approach for the gifted*



2. Enriched curriculum

More and more is spoken in Romania about the need to develop projects for the identification and education of the gifted.

The Romanian educational system focuses on programmes for the development of the gifted through centres of excellence where children can enrol and study based on a curriculum specially designed for their interests and giftedness. However, there are numerous debates on the intervention methods used in the education of the gifted. The related literature presents the enriched curriculum as an important part in the education of the gifted. Enriched curriculum includes all study, planning and development strategies required by the development of formal,

non-formal and informal education contents for the gifted, structured on subjects of study⁵. It includes: specific objectives for each subject of study, educational actions, informational or educational contents needed for the achievement of the objectives, conditions for achieving them, planning and organization of instructional-educational situations, assessment of results.

The Curriculum contains: *a core curriculum, differentiated curriculum and curriculum at the decision of school*. The *core curriculum* includes all subjects studied compulsorily by all children in a classroom. The number of classes included in the core curriculum is also compulsory and differs from one grade to another. The *differentiated curriculum* is a package of hours allotted to subjects related to the area of study. The *curriculum at the decision of school (CDS)* – includes all educational processes and learning experiences offered to pupils and students by a school within its own curricular offer. Most specialists agree that the best method of adapting the educational process for the gifted is to provide them with knowledge above the level of the syllabus in a gradual manner according to their possibilities⁶. This process can be fulfilled through an enriched curriculum, which can be implemented in three stages. ⁷The first stage is the assessment of the gifted` level at the beginning of the training programme. Special school syllabi are designed in the second stage. The teacher-trainer in charge with the education of the gifted must have competences in working with the gifted⁸. According to the specialization, teachers set the goals and the objectives, the contents and the methodology, the timing required by the implementation and the assessment procedure. The methodology of implementing the enriched curriculum must have a well set aim. It focuses on the stimulation of innate abilities of the gifted according to their giftedness and their interests (Starko, 1989). The enriched curriculum can be applied in two ways: development and acceleration.

Acceleration involves studying the units based on their objectives but in a more accelerated pace than usual⁹. The acceleration process is viable only provided that it is implemented individually, based on a concentric and personalized structure (Table no VII. 2). Each gifted will go through the syllabus in an individualized manner.

Table no 2. *Individualized and personalized action plan for*

Implementation of strategies/ actions	Personal responsibilities	Timing
Monitoring stages	Personal responsibilities	Timing
The results of assessment strategies		

⁵Xiaoju Duan; Jiannong Shi; Dan Zhou, *Developmental Changes in Processing Speed: Influence of Accelerated Education for Gifted Children*, Gifted Child Quarterly, 04/2010, Volume 54, Issue 2.

⁶C.A., Tomlinson, S.N., Kaplan, J.S., Renzulli, J.H., Purcell, J.H., Leppien, D.E. Burns, Etal.. *The parallel curriculum: A design to develop learning potential and challenge advanced learning* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press (2009).

⁷GA Davis and SB Rimm, *Education of the Gifted and Talented*. 5th ed. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2004.

⁸DW Chan, *Characteristics and competencies of teachers of gifted learners: The Hong Kong student perspective*. Roper Review 33: 160–169, 2011.

⁹Lee, Seon-Young; Olszewski-Kubilius, Paula; Peternel, George, *The Efficacy of Academic Acceleration for Gifted Minority Students*, Gifted Child Quarterly, 07/2010, Volume 54, Issue 3

Continuous assessment of efficiency and feasibility of evaluation	Personal responsibilities	Timing
Revision of results and improvement of plans	Personal responsibilities	Timing

Some specialists believe that acceleration¹⁰ involves skipping certain instructional sequences with redundant character. The second way is to develop the curriculum beyond the maximum level stipulated by the syllabus for a subject of study. Contents are selected according to individual learning abilities and assimilation is also individual (particularized adaptation and application).

The main objective of improving the curriculum is to enrich the knowledge and develop the abilities of the gifted according to their giftedness.

The personalized training programme of the gifted focuses on the gifted` personal involvement in their training. They become partners in the learning process. Any suggestion made by the gifted is carefully analysed and those which improve the educational process are also taken into account. Educational actions don`t aim only the theoretical aspects but also the applicability of knowledge.

The principles that guide the teacher-trainer are:

- each gifted child/pupil is unique, has an individual personality with personal abilities, outstanding attitudes and learning styles;
- learning experiences an intrinsic motivation if the gifted are stimulated to access knowledge and learning according to their giftedness and interests;
- the learning process acquires meaning and pleasure for the gifted if the contents are challenging and stimulating.

The enriched curriculum is presented in a special syllabus which contains elements above the level of the regular syllabus for that grade (development level) and in a certain subject. Thus, the gifted will accelerate their studies in that subject by acquiring knowledge according to their interests and possibilities¹¹. This aspect involves adjustment of timing to the rhythm and intellectual abilities of the gifted child/pupil. The main objectives of the enriched curriculum for the gifted focus on the development of abilities needed to conceptualize, to synthesize what is essential for the understanding of new concepts based on the development of critical attitudes and objective assessment of their knowledge. It also focuses on producing new ideas through original processing of the old ones, on understanding and finding solutions for unknown problems and situations and on practical application of theoretical knowledge. The enrichment of curriculum involves setting learning objectives with gradual difficulty, which children should achieve in their personal pace. Sustained effort would thus lead to success and it would encourage motivational attitudes and adjustment to correctional interventions. For these reasons, strategies for achieving learning objective will focus on acquisition of new knowledge and development of skills in a gradual, increasing manner.

The elaboration of the syllabus for the implementation of *The personalized training programme of the gifted* has several stages: initial diagnosis which involves a complex assessment of the gifted` abilities, thorough analysis of the situation and setting the child`s/pupil`s priorities, writing the personal file of the gifted, application of the special syllabus, assessment of its effects and revision after assessment. *The personalized training programme of the gifted* stipulates: the responsibilities of

¹⁰ Alonso, J.A. (1995b), *Accelerarea include asimilare de cunoștințe, explorare, dezvoltare de aptitudini prin activități individuale*.

¹¹ M.R., Coleman, D.M., Winn, & C.C. Harradine, *Expanding educational excellence: The power of schools*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, Promoting Academic Success of Boys of Color, 2013.

teachers involved in designing the special syllabi, medium and long-term objectives (under behavioural aspect) that need to be achieved, needed means and resources, timing for interventions, assessment criteria of the gifted` progress, assessment tools and ways. Another action is the revision of special syllabi in order to constantly adapt them to global requirements of the gifted. The design of special syllabi involves professionals who also work in the training programme.

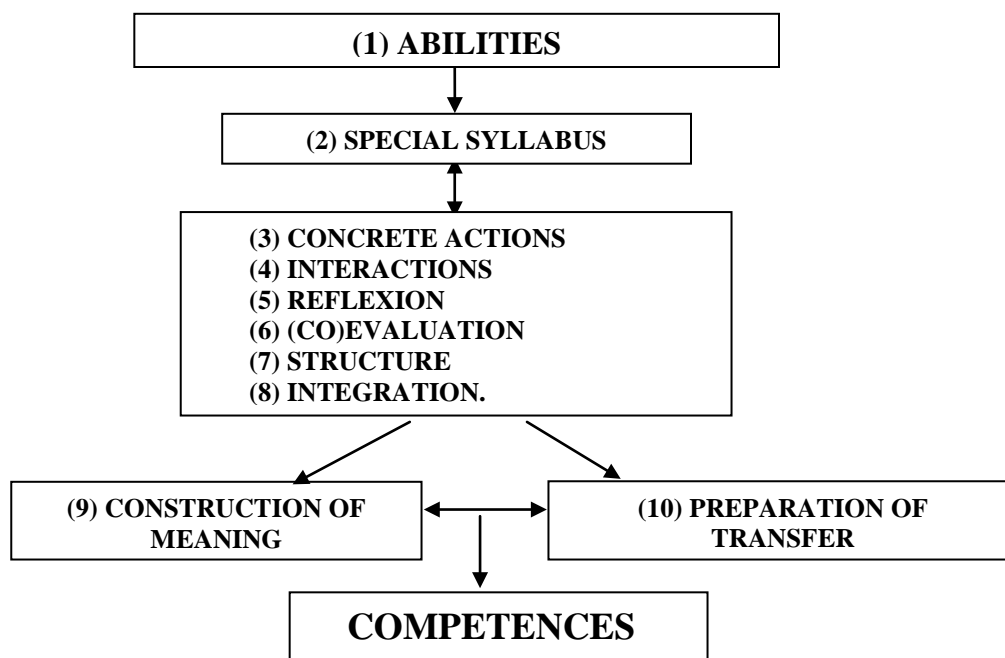
The enriched curriculum for the gifted is meant to be an individual or group action conducted by teacher-trainers for each subject of study. Starting from the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom according to the syllabus, the special syllabus offers more complex and thorough information in a field (subject of study) according to the intellectual possibilities of the gifted and to their interest for the subject.¹² The curriculum for mass education is not replaced but enlarged, more elaborated and approached under more aspects than those promoted by the syllabus. It tries to improve the syllabus and give up redundant and insignificant contents. The enriched curriculum focuses on how to accelerate study and on differentiation by supplementing the contents of the syllabi and approach of more difficult activities. It selects activities which are interesting for gifted pre-schoolers or pupils. Enriched curriculum is an alternative training method of the gifted which takes place in and outside school and it involves an extension of curricular and extracurricular offer.

The enriched curriculum contains a number of topics which will be approached in and outside school classes (two extra classes weekly). They are supplementary and complementary information for the contents of core and differentiated curriculum. *The enriched curriculum* is in fact deepening and development of the knowledge owned by the gifted. This type of curriculum is viable provided that it takes into account: the options of the gifted, individual assimilation possibilities, orientation on a special school syllabus which is approved by decision makers: school principle, the school inspector (or the inspector in charge with the excellence centre). The development involves a higher amount of knowledge for a certain chapter or unit, new topics or chapters according to the outstanding abilities of the gifted.

The special school syllabus is a document developed by the teacher-trainer in charge with teaching the gifted and it has a normative character that shapes the contents of the instructive-educational process in a field of study. The role of school syllabus is to guide the teacher`s activity so as to achieve the expected and desired results in the work with the gifted. Another role is to contribute to the achievement of their full potential and to ensure the practical-applicative character of the acquisitions. *The special syllabus* is designed based on the maximum number of hours allotted to the subject in the curriculum. The contents are organized and structured according to the logical and didactical unfolding of the subject of study and the structure of the educational system (on levels, profiles, fields of study). It can be structured as continuous and gradual acquisition of knowledge by increasing the difficulty and complexity level. The elaboration of special syllabi and curricular materials is based on competences, which are the differentiation tool of contents, according to the methodological framework for the development of a competence (V.Chiş, 2005) (see figure VI. 4).

¹²J.J.Gallagher, Foreword. In M. R. Coleman & S. K. Johnsen (Eds.), *Implementing RtI with gifted students: Service models, trends, and issues* (pp. ix–xi). Waco, TX: PrufrockPress,2013.

Figure VI.4. *Framework for developing a competence*



The development of competences in the teaching process has a flexible character when seen from a socio-constructivist perspective. Teachers can interfere in its application according to requirements. The teacher details the contents of the special syllabus and provides the necessary methodological support needed to carry out the activity in an optimal manner.

Special syllabi are designed to achieve the following goals:

- knowledge and appropriate use of subject-specific concepts;
- explanation and interpretation of ideas, projects and processes;
- critical examination of ideas, projects and processes;
- improvement and innovation of the learning process;
- integration and use of new information and communication technologies;
- awareness and interpretation of subject-specific issues;
- development and exploitation of intra- and inter correlations to optimize the learning of gifted;
- showing positive and responsible attitude towards the self-training of the gifted.

Each special syllabus is accompanied by methodological suggestions for its application. Auxiliary materials are also recommended for a proper application of the syllabus. They can contain teaching materials (made by teachers or taken from the distribution network), various modern and challenging teaching materials. They facilitate the usage of special syllabi in the educational process with the gifted and can easily be adapted to individual needs. The teacher-trainer uses also encyclopaedias, dictionaries, educational CDs and other tools that help in the acquisition process, such as information technology. All these materials are used along with the course book.

2.1. Educational benefits of enriched curriculum

The enriched curriculum aims to be an accessible and viable component of teaching activity with the gifted which focuses not only on informational aspects but also on formative ones by means of promoted values and attitudes.

Creating a school environment centred on values and democratic relations.

Promoting a system of cultural, moral and civic values according to educational and personal ideal.

Creating a secure socio-affective climate.

Involvement of the gifted in personal development.

Development of socio-educational partnerships with family and other institutions with educational responsibilities in terms of excellence.

Participation of the gifted in their own professional development and selection of their own way of training.

Enriched curriculum based on well designed and efficiently implemented special syllabi focuses on the achievement of general competences in the personality of the gifted. The enriched syllabus for the gifted children aims to: add extra contents to the subjects from regular syllabi, use new data for each subject of study, addition of supplementary chapters, practical individual or group applications which would allow the creative usage of knowledge acquired at school or through other forms of training, alternative solutions, concrete problem solving.

Enriched syllabi will be designed by teachers who work with that class according to the principles of modern education—a school for each child. Under organizational aspect, the individualization of education for the gifted will not take place in special classes. The training programme will take place in regular classes because these requirements are part of a modern teacher's responsibilities:

- knowledge and appropriate use of basic concept used in each subject of study; their revaluation in the identification of basic phenomena;
- interpretation and explanation of different phenomena from a personal point of view;
- evaluation and self-evaluation of the acquisition of objectives;
- referring in a critical and constructive manner to theoretical and practical contents;
- using methods, techniques and tools appropriate for their ability and skills;
- making connections between acquisitions from school subjects and other fields of knowledge and human practice.

Special syllabi aim the acquisition of general competences and of competences specific for each unit based on interactive, dynamic and functional relations. Thus, a general competence is achieved through more specific competences and a specific competence can be versatile, contributing to the achievement of several general competences. The contents of the special syllabus for the gifted are tools or means selected for the achievement of specific competences. It depends on the teacher-trainer to choose the best training and assessment methodology.

However, the teacher-trainer should take into consideration some conditions when developing and using these training strategies:

- selection and differentiation of teaching methods and procedures according to the type of competence (psychopedagogic, social, management), to the complexity level of learning acquisitions (knowledge and understanding, explanation and interpretation, critical thinking, application), and to the knowledge level of the gifted;
- encourage the use of methods of self-discovery and experimentation in order to improve learning performance of the gifted;

- planning differentiated educational strategies centered on preschoolers / gifted pupils, taking into account the personality traits and their training needs;
- used of plentiful resources, proper for the aims of the activity which involve the gifted in their training – papers with methodological-scientific character, multimedia systems, case studies, simulations etc.;
- diversification (growth) of opportunities to integrate new information and communication technologies in teaching activity;
- systematic assessment of the gifted` performance based on the aims of special syllabus; the use of oral, written tasks, practical tasks and alternative assessment methods (essays, projects, portfolios etc.).

When applying special syllabi, teachers have to take into consideration conceptual connections and mutual conditioning between subjects of study. The teacher`s role is essential in any educational role. Shoshana Rosemarin states that: *each of the 50 Nobel laureates participating in Shavinina`s (2009) study had at least one exceptional teacher who had acted as a role model.*¹³ The teacher will revalue the educational potential of the subject of study, will develop communication opportunities for the gifted, will favour decision making and autonomous thinking and will assume the role of ‘facilitator of learning’. Teachers will also ensure a stimulating and warm learning environment which promotes active learning, positive attitudes and attachment for the study group. When describing the profile of the proper teacher for the education of the gifted Renzulli (1992) refers to the following traits: *the ability to apply knowledge to solve real-life problems; flexibility; openness; high energy; commitment to excellence; and ability to convey a passion for the subject matter.*¹⁴

Creative application of special syllabus for the gifted requires flexibility in thinking. Thus, teachers need to be up-to-date with new information in their field, to examine critically their own activity and involvement in their professional development. The teacher will interact with colleagues who teach the same subject but also with others and will show his availability to cooperate in the best interest of the gifted. Teacher-trainers who work with the gifted are trained from a psychopedagogic perspective for the work with the gifted. They are appointed by the school inspector. Their passion for work and profession is revealed by receptiveness for novelty and promotion of valid innovation in their field. The aim of these activities is a more efficient teaching-learning-evaluation process in the work with the gifted.

The stimulation of pre-schoolers/ pupils for the subject of study, the unit, daily activity.

Pupils discuss the ideas related to the topic after/before the study of the unit under the teacher`s guidance.

Setting the objectives: the teacher sets the contents, the way activities are conducted and their assessment.

Division of tasks (the teacher monitors their difficulty level). Research/creation/investigation. Individual study of bibliographical resources used in practical applications according to the subject of study: problem solving, individual project, writing an article, stories, interviews with different people.

¹³Rosemarin, Shoshana, Should the teacher of the gifted be gifted?, Gifted Education International, 09/2014, Volume 30, Issue 3, p.265.

¹⁴JS Renzulli. A general theory for the development of creative productivity in young people. In: Mo`nks FJ and Peters WAM (eds.) Proceedings of the Ninth World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children: Talent for the Future. Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1992pp. 51–72,

Procession of data (individually or in group).The teacher can signal content errors, the organization of learning tasks and the accuracy of theoretical or practical-applicative project. The final layout: group discussions on the design and thoroughness of methodological approach. The teacher monitors and assesses individual results of gifted pre-schoolers/ pupils.

Feed-back:

- from the teacher;
- from classmates (appreciations, questions, exchange of ideas etc.);
- self-evaluation.

The teacher will consider a few aspects that contribute to the achievement of objectives as part of an optimal unfolding of activities for the enrichment of the gifted in heterogeneous classes. Some of these activities are: the teacher`s good, systematic and constant preparation, pedagogic qualities that enable him to treat children differently according to their abilities, professionalism and dedication in the activity with children who show obvious differences. The teacher-trainer`s role in implementation of enriched curriculum in the activity with the gifted during curricular and extracurricular activities is essential.¹⁵The teacher is guided by the core curriculum but considers independently the intellectual and cognitive needs of the gifted. Thus, teachers adapt their teaching activity to the necessities of the gifted. They need to think about making the transfer from core curriculum to the enriched one in an accessible manner, adapted for the gifted and to select the most appropriate teaching means. Teachers have to find a balance between the mutual needs of the group and the individual needs.The teacher-trainer will combine modern and individualized teaching strategies (with the purpose of structuring and shaping learning situations). The use of these strategies allows the gifted to get actively involved in their training. The number of learning tasks given to the gifted needs to be in accordance with their cognitive abilities and the teacher`s support and intervention should be as rare as possible. The interventions have stimulation and correctional role, placing emphasis on the gifted cognitive independence. In terms of teaching-learning techniques, the teacher selects the most efficient and engaging ones. They adjust them to the intellectual development of the gifted so as to engage them in the superior level of their intellectual development.

Important is also the learning environment and the mutual respect. The teacher assumes new roles: consultant, facilitator, moderator, even active participant in the learning process; he promotes learning by cooperation, balances individual workload with group workload, is in charge with classroom management, assesses continuously and formatively.

Table no 5. *Activity grid for the gifted*

The subjects of the training programme	Application of the training programme		Monitoring and formative evaluation	Control and regulation
Timing	School Activities	Extracurricular activities	Formative-continuous evaluation	When needed
	Number of hours	Number of hours		

¹⁵James J. Gallagher, Political Issues in GiftedEducation, Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 2015, Vol. 38(1) 77–89, p.84.

2.2. The system of evaluation standards

The teacher-trainer aim is to stimulate the gifted, to facilitate learning and offer moral and emotional support as Hargrove (2005) stated: *'the great teachers challenge the students while simultaneously offering support and making it "okay" to try and fail and try again'*¹⁶. The teacher-trainer, the mentor who works with the gifted has to consider some quality standards in terms of instructive-educational acts, such as:

- pedagogical quality standards;
- psycho-socio-physiological quality standards;
- quality standards related to family life.

The pedagogical quality standards refer to the following conditions that must be met by an educational process adapted for the gifted¹⁷:

- the quality and modernity of curriculum (lesson plans, syllabi, course books);
- psychopedagogic training of teachers who work with the gifted based on pedagogic skills, passion for work and teaching tact;
- use of technical-material base in the instructive-educational activity with the gifted;
- use of modern teaching strategies that would determine the active-participative character of the gifted in the teaching process; they would also ensure the accessibility and operability of acquired skills;
- individualized and differentiated handling of the gifted, aiming the revaluation of outstanding individual abilities (intellectual abilities, abilities, interests, aspirations, etc.);
- ensuring the transfer of knowledge, strategies, thinking and patterns;
- democratic relations between gifted pre-schoolers/pupils and teachers;
- promoting collaboration between school and family through meetings, partnerships, mutual actions;

Psycho-socio-physiological quality standards refer to the following:

- conditions necessary for the workout of a well-built, healthy, strong and balanced body;
- providing a normal and balanced mental activity, capable of conducting mental, affective and volitional activity;
- assuring interpersonal and social relationships favourable to the gifted (favouring optimal relationships within the group of pupils).

Quality standards related to family life refer to the following conditions:

- stimulating and supporting family climate;
- priority and constant concern for the education of the gifted;
- nurturing a positive attitude towards school, learning and the gifted child's concerns; understanding their way of being;
- ensuring favourable conditions for the optimal development of the gifted according to his/her giftedness;
- parents nurture the independence spirit of independence with gifted pre-schoolers/pupils as well as a moderate authority (based on the sense of proportion in parents' attitude and requirements).

These quality standards need to be met during teaching activities with the gifted both at school and in extracurricular activities.

¹⁶K. Hargrove, What makes a 'good' teacher 'great'? *Gifted Child Today* 28: 30–31, 2005, p. 30.

¹⁷U.M.Gross, International Perspectives. In N. Colangelo & G. Davis (Eds.), *The handbook of gifted education* (3rd ed., pp. 547–557). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2003.

Family, school and society should have the same demands because only in this manner, the gifted will be able to develop their innate abilities and become promoters of social and cultural evolution.

3.Conclusions

The enriched curriculum is part of the training programme for the education of the gifted. This programme is elaborated by teacher-trainers based on special syllabi, structured on subjects of study (according to the options of the gifted). Besides knowledge studied by all children enrolled in mass education, the individualized contents contain information on subjects of cognitive interest for the gifted. The enriched curriculum aims at goals such as stimulation of logical thinking, enrichment of creativity, self-achievement, and increased self-esteem based on blending theory with practice. Another aim is the achievement of relevant and satisfactory results according to the abilities of the gifted.

Pre-schoolers and pupils acquire the newest acquisitions in their field of interest by means of enriched curriculum. They develop abilities that would turn into competences in their field of giftedness and they are also given the opportunity to develop according to their way of being. We believe that the enriched curriculum is an authentic strategy for the education of the gifted. It has proven itself to be a viable component in the promotion of “intellectual excellence”.

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