

The Reality of Detecting and Caring for Gifted Children in Algeria

-Towards a Proposed Integration Strategy-

واقع الكشف والتكفل بالطفل الموهوب في الجزائر – نحو استراتيجية إدماجية مقترحة-

Pr/ Amel Bourouba¹

أمال بورובה

Mohamed Lamine Debaghine - University Setif 2

a.bourouba@univ-setif2.dz

Pr/ Rezki KETTAF

رزقي قتاف

r.kettaf@univ-setif2.dz

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Abstract:

The current study aims to identify the reality of detection and care for gifted children in Algeria, as well as to suggest some integration strategies for these two clinical processes, as we are convinced and through analyzing the situation that the family and the school play a big irreplaceable role in this process, as the family is the first and most important environment in which this talent is nurtured, and it is not born from nothingness, where parents play a major role in taking care of their innovator child who is superior, distinguished by talents and skills and an owner of special mental creative and achievement abilities... and in particular, preserving their emotional and behavioral strength and balance. Then comes the role of the official educational institution represented by the school, specifically through the class teacher in the process of detection and refinement of this outstanding ability and in directing it.

Therefore, this paper sought to highlight the role of the early necessary detection for proper sponsorship of those children through integration means and techniques parallel with the scientific and technological advances of the current era.

Key words: Talented Child; Intelligence; Early Detection; Sponsorship; Integration Strategies.

المخلص:

هدفت الدراسة الراهنة إلى التعرف على واقع الكشف والتكفل بالطفل الموهوب في الجزائر وكذا اقتراح بعض الاستراتيجيات الإدماجية لهاتين السيوريتين العيادية، قناعة منا ومن خلال تحليل الوضع أن للأسرة والمدرسة دورا كبيرا لا بديل له في هذه العملية، إذ تعتبر الأسرة أول وأهم وسط تتعرع فيها هذه الموهبة، وهي ليست وليدة العدم، حيث يلعب الأولياء دور رئيسي في كيفية تولي رعاية طفلهم الموسوم بالمبتكر، المتفوق، بالتميز

¹ - Correspondent author.

بالمواهب والمهارات الخاصة، بصاحب القدرات العقلية والإبداعية و التحصيلية الخاصة..ومنها بالخصوص في كيفية المحافظة على قوتهم وتوازنهم سيّما الوجداني والسلوكي بشكل عام. يأتي بعد ذلك دور المؤسسة التعليمية التربوية الرسمية المتمثلة في المدرسة وبالتحديد من خلال معّلم الصف في عملية الكشف وصقل هذه القدرة المتميزة وفي كيفية توجيهها.

ومنه فقد سعت هذه الورقة البحثية إلى إبراز دور الكشف المبكر الضروري للتكفل السليم بهؤلاء الأطفال، من خلال وسائل وتقنيات إدماجية موازاة مع التقدم العلمي والتكنولوجي للعصر الحالي...
الكلمات المفتاحية: الطفل الموهوب؛ الذكاء؛ الكشف المبكر؛ التكفل؛ الاستراتيجيات الإدماجية.

Introduction:

Children differ in terms of their mental and physical capabilities, some of them have simple limited abilities, and some of them have average “normal” abilities, and there are others who are distinguished by their high abilities which make them superior or as they are called by psychologists and educators as talented or gifted. These talented children are specifically categorized under the umbrella of special education. This category is facing a path full of pitfalls on the social level in general and on the academic level in particular, despite the recent growing interest of specialized scientific institutions in the field through various conferences, seminars and meetings to present accurate research and deep experiences related to the curricula of teaching these students, as well as programs and protocols to care for them as a huge human wealth that cannot be underestimated for the advancement and prosperity of society.

Many scientists and researchers in the field have indicated the need to take care of this special group of children, including, for example, but not limited to, the Belgian researcher from the University of Anvers Tessa Kieboom (2018) author and partner of several gifted children, Franz Monks from Nimégue University in the Netherlands, and they are the ones who, established a special research center for mental abilities (CBO) in 1998. They called for the urgent need for early attention to the gifted child, because if he is not taken care of, those high mental capabilities will fade, and thus this high-level motivation, the ability to innovate, and the special capabilities will diminish.

The gifted child in Algeria, according to experts and practitioners, faces during his development various types of problems that range in severity from the simple to the complex, most notably the early detection, thus, finding better measures for taking care of him in the context of limited capable human resources and materials related to means and mechanisms.

The process of early detection of the gifted and talented children is of paramount importance in determining the behavior and educational and psychological requirements for these people so that they can be followed up and programs and services compatible with their growth and special needs can be put in place. Especially since each case is separate in terms of acquisitions and faculties, and this was

confirmed by researcher Tessa Kieboom through her practice during the last fifteen (15) years on 6,000 children, adolescents and adults, as it has been found that this intellectual diversity of each individual is of paramount importance in the field of support, assistance and training¹. Therefore, the completion of this type of services, which are mainly related to screening and evaluation, requires the importance of providing a complete group and integrating strategies of scientific methods, means and tools necessary for diagnosis and the continuity of their follow-up, not only for the competent authority, but for all those around them.

In view of the above, the following question can be asked:

- Are there available mechanisms for early detection of gifted children? Are integration programs contributing to take care of them?

1. Definition of Gifted Child:

There are many terms that express the gifted child, such as the smart child, the superior, the genius, the innovative... The term gifted child is the most common term, and the following are some of its definitions:

The National Assembly defines the gifted child as: "He is that person who shows or has the potential to manifest an exceptional level of performance in one or more of the following areas:

- General mental ability.
- Certain academic readiness.
- Creative thinking.
- Leadership ability.
- Visual and performing arts².

Othman Nagati (1983) states that the gifted are those with high intelligence, whose percentage reaches 145 degrees, and they represent about one in a thousand of the general population statistics, in contrast to the intelligent category, whose intelligence ranges between 130-145 degrees, they represent about 2% and they almost excel in academic achievement³.

The French researcher and specialist in integrative psychotherapy, Jeanne Siaud Facclin, says: "The gifted child is a child with certain functional characteristics as well as significantly high intellectual potential, and the comprehensive psychological assessment Ensuring that these can be identified effectively and objectively. An IQ score of approximately 130 is usually maintained in approved and standardized intelligence tests, as IQ is not a measure of intelligence, but an assessment of intellectual abilities that allows showing one's intellectual performance compared to the performance of other children of the same age⁴.

We refer to Marland's definition or what is called the federal definition issued by the Ministry of Education in the United States of America (1972) and relied upon in the country itself in defining this category of children that: "Gifted children are people who are professionally qualified, and they are capable, thanks to their distinctive abilities, of high performance. They require distinguished educational programs and services that are more than those provided by regular school programs in order to achieve their contributions to themselves and to society. They include children who are capable of high performance, those children with clear achievements or latent abilities in any of the following areas: general mental ability, specific academic readiness, creative or productive thinking leadership ability, visual and performing arts, and psychomotor ability⁵.

Gestalt school also goes states that the talented innovator is that individual who is able to re-integrate the knowledge and ideas in a new way⁶.

The following definition, representative of the modern trend, can be relied on that the gifted child is that individual who shows featured performance compared with the group age to which it belongs to in one or more of the following dimensions:

- High mental ability, with an IQ greater than one or two standard deviations.
- High creative ability.
- The ability to achieve high academic achievement.
- The ability to perform distinct skills such as artistic, mathematical or linguistic skills...etc.
- The ability to persevere, commitment, high motivation, flexibility and independence in thinking... or mental personality traits that distinguish the gifted from others⁷.

It is noted from the foregoing that it is relied on several different criteria in defining the gifted child, including the test of mental abilities, personal traits and the test of emotional and social traits. The important thing is that all of these definitions focus on the fact that the gifted child is distinguished, unlike children of his age, with high competence, distinct abilities, and broad interests and inclinations in the intellectual, artistic, literary and technical fields, which makes their future contribution effective in achieving the welfare of society in general, knowing that these children are just like children. Ordinary people are not all equal in talents, abilities, and interests.

2. Characteristics of a gifted child:

Despite the heterogeneity of the category of gifted children, they have common characteristics, which vary between physical characteristics, mood-emotional, mental-cognitive and between interests and tendencies and social skills... Some of them are evident in what follows:

- Unusual Vigilance since infancy.

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- A fast learner who can combine ideas quickly.
- High ability on remembering, i.e. remembering a lot of information.
- Unusually large quantity of vocabulary and complex sentences considering his age. He is unusually verbal.
- Advanced absorb to differentiate between vocabulary and metaphors, in the sense that he has the ability to stimulate new ideas.
- Enjoying issues with numbers and puzzles, and individual games are preferred.
- Self learning to read and write extensively before school. He excels academically.
- Unnaturally emotional depth, intense feelings and reactions, highly sensitive, friendly and gentle.
- His thinking is abstract, complex, logical, and critically insightful, meaning he has the ability to extract abstract things and process information in a complex and integrative way.
- He shows idealism and a sense of justice from an early age. He is also distressed by the rules of routine within his room.
- He cares with social and political issues and injustice. He is insightful, sympathetic, and sensitive to the problems of others, i.e. socially aware.
- He is busy with his own thoughts and daydreams.
- No possible slowness and inefficiency, whether in himself or in others, as well as the rules of routine within the classroom.
- Ability to learn basic skills more quickly and train less.
- His questions are straightforward and goes beyond what he knows.
- His interests are broad range, although his interest may sometimes be intense in only one area.
- He can from a longer period of attention, persistence and focus.
- His curiosity is very advanced, and the questions are without limits.
- Interest of experimenting and doing things differently.
- Tilt to put ideas or things together in unfamiliar or unclear ways "different thinking" i.e. going beyond some steps in the normal sequence of thinking.
- Heavy and sometimes unusual sense on publicity, especially in his play on vocabulary.
- Desire in arranging things and people through complex games or other schemes.
- They are distinguished by preschool imagination and a strong clear imagination after joining the class^{8 9}. (8) (9)

3. How to measure talent:

Many specialists believe that talent is an emerging experience in the sense that it is not an innate ability that is born with a person and continues with him, but rather it is

the care, development and disclosure of abilities... Measuring this talent, whether through IQ, academic achievement, or any other means, will always include incomplete tools and techniques to be determined... But in general, since talent includes many manifestations and mental constructs of intelligence, creativity, and academic achievement, as well as behavioral, emotional, mental, and social characteristics and attributes of the gifted¹⁰. We can count on the following procedural steps to measure talent:

- Revealing the characteristics of personal and family antecedents.
- Relying on metric and psychological tests, and it is one of the objective tools used by researchers and psychological practitioners, such as:

3.1. Mental abilities metrics (intelligence tests):

High mental ability is one of the basic dimensions in defining giftedness. An individual is considered gifted if his mental ability, measured by intelligence tests, exceeds two standard deviations from the mean, and in terms of IQ, if his IQ is more than 130 degrees. Among the general intelligence measures, which are suitable for measuring and diagnosing the general mental ability of the gifted, are as follows:

- The Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale.
- The Wechsler Intelligence Scale.
- The Mc Carty Scales Children's Abilities.
- Goodenough-Harris Drawing Test.
- Slosson Intelligence Test for Children¹¹.
- Measures of academic achievement, which are numerous, including but not limited to: Iowa tests of basic-skills (LTBS) and California test Cali.

So talent is a manifestation of intelligence, and it can grow with the degree of intelligence growth.

3.2. Creativity Metrics:

Creativity, which is the ability to transcend reality and the familiar, is considered one of the most important criteria included in the definition of talented and superior.

Since creative thinking is one of the inexhaustible sources for the development of human societies, taking care of it is considered one of the main tasks of every society that believes in development and the exploitation of human energies. One of the priorities to nurture this source of knowledge of great importance is to determine the presence of this trait in individuals, as nothing can be nurtured without identifying and dealing with it. Hence, the issue of determining the amount of creative thinking is very important, and it must be given the attention of everyone, starting with the family and passing through the school, the first educational institution for nurturing and nourishing minds, and ending with all its institutions¹².

The measures of creativity or creative thinking or special talents are appropriate measures in determining the creative ability of the subject. The Torrance scale for creative thinking, which consists of two forms (the verbal image and the formal image), is one of the well-known measures in this regard, as well as the Torrance and Guilford scale for innovative thinking¹³.

The Paul Torrance Scale for Creative Thinking, developed in the 1970s, contains three measurable dimensions: originality, flexibility, and fluency.

- **Originality:** It means the ability to renew ideas and come up with new, rare and unfamiliar ideas. Torrance describes high-authenticity students as: "Those who can deviate from the ordinary, perceive relationships, and think of solutions that are different and original than those thought of by their classmates or mentioned in their textbooks"¹⁴. The fluency score is calculated on a quantitative basis and measured across all seven activities of the verbal tests¹⁵.
- **Flexibility:** It is the ability to diversify or differ in the ideas or solutions that the individual comes with, and the ease with which the individual can change his position or point of view according to what is required by the idea or problem to be solved. Torrance notes to resilient students that: "When one of their plans or methods fails, they quickly come up with a different approach, and they use many strategies or approaches to problems, immediately abandoning unproductive approaches though they never leave the goal. They simply find another way to get the goal". Two types of flexibility can be identified: adaptive and automatic¹⁶. The flexibility score is calculated on a qualitative basis, and it is measured according to the categories of responses. Torrance has developed lists of categories for the 1-2-3-4-5 verbal expression tests¹⁷.
- **Fluency:** It means the speed or ease in issuing ideas or solutions to problems in a way that is commensurate with the requirements of the realistic environment, so that ideas are not random and emanating from lack of knowledge and ignorance, and they represent the quantitative aspect of innovation. Guilford (1962) identified four factors of fluency: verbal, intellectual, expressive, and associative fluency¹⁸. The score for originality is calculated on the basis of the statistical scarcity of the respondent's responses, and a point is given for originality in all verbal expression tests except for the sixth test due to scarcity among the respondents¹⁹.

4. The reality of revealing a gifted child:

Usually, parents can't assume their children that they are gifted only after entering the school system, and they may not notice their behavior and way of thinking, so that child is described as "difficult", "extreme", "stubborn", "strange", "lives in a special world" or.... by no means, this child enjoys a high degree of motivation, learning and

creative thinking. He is very focused and sensitive, has a lot of curiosity and has developed skills... the thing which makes him different from others. This difference will inevitably affect his relationships and his dealings with others, especially through his family members and his peers.

The child then joins school, and the teacher may pay attention to him, who may be able to guide him properly according to his personal formation as well as the available capabilities and means. He may also graduate from it without being discovered for many factors, including: emotional or behavioral problems that hinders the clarity of his talent and energies, and because the person in charge of the class focuses in his remarks on the extent of follow-up to the prescribed educational program and does not pay any attention to the child's preparations and energies, so those abilities and tendencies remain idle and hidden. This category suffers from the lack of private schools or rather a special program consistent with the mental abilities of this talented person, but the question that comes to our mind, since the talented is a special case and each one is unique, how can a special program be built for each talent separately, and who will supervise this sponsorship process? Does this child need a special tutor or team work?

It is true that there are many practicing psychologists at the school level, or what is known as "examination and follow-up units", but if we try to evaluate this psychological support, we find that it is mostly based on how to help these people adapt in the school environment with children who are less competent than them, or this specialist may be biased and focuses on the process of evaluating and measuring general intelligence, which is usually determined by linguistic, logical, and mathematical intelligence, meaning that the diagnostic process, even with the intervention of a specialist, continues to focus on academic aspects. Knowing that intelligence differs not only in degree but also in type, and this is what researcher Howard Gardner (1983) touched upon in his book entitled: "Frames of the Mind", where he developed a strong state of intelligence into multiple states, represented in the table below, knowing that he added other states of intelligence later:

Table No. 01 represents cases of multiple intelligences according to Gardner:

Types of intelligence	Indication
1- Linguistic intelligence	Linguistic prowess as measured by intelligence and talent tests.
2- Musical intelligence	The ability to recognize nuances and patterns of melodies and rhythms in musical performance.
3- Logical mathematical intelligence	The ability to understand causation through inductive and deductive reasoning and to understand theoretical models

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	using symbols and numbers.
4- Visual intelligence	The ability to visualize spatial dimensions, find inner fantasies, and arrange objects in an efficient and meaningful manner.
5- Sensory- kinesthetic intelligence	The ability to feel and control body movements when exercising, dancing, etc.
6- Social intelligence	Enhance communicative ability, interpersonal relationships, and the ability to feel and lead others.
7- Personal intelligence	Strong self- awareness, and the ability to develop inner spiritual states of awareness and self-reflection.

Source: Webb James et al., A Parent's Guide to Raising Gifted Children, OP. Ci., p.7.

Isn't this unfair to this talent, which leads to a deviation in his behavior, which becomes a source of riots in the classroom and he is unable to adapt to the level of directed lessons as he does not like routine and repetition, which will lead him to academic failure...

There are associations for parents of students and others that ensure the protection of childhood and others... But in general, the nature of their activities includes the social part in particular, i.e. material assistance only, such as the acquisition of school supplies, medical follow-up (glasses, surgeries, and the acquisition of medicines...).

So let's wonder how to revealing the gifted child? And who is following him?

5. An Integrating Strategy to take care of the gifted child:

- Psycho- sponsorship:

Psychological care in the clinical field is generally defined as all psychotherapeutic methods (therapeutic intervention through different techniques inspired by different psychological approaches) and preventive methods provided by the clinical psychologist. The preventive methods are: **primary prevention** that is, the pre- intervention of these (health education, for example), and **secondary prevention** is represented in the intervention of patients who are at risk and who have difficulties in adapting for example... and **tertiary prevention**: are strategies that aim to reduce risks for these gifted children²⁰.

As for the therapeutic intervention and during this interaction between the two parties (a relationship within a framework that has a formative goal), what is meant by an integration strategy?

Since giftedness is a comprehensive and complex phenomenon, there is a need for intense and profound efforts by non-specialists and specialists in early detection, and thus the adoption of comprehensive strategies that deal with all aspects and dimensions of this phenomenon.

Efficiency in social relations and adaptation may be one of the most important factors that determine if gifted children will become successful members. Therefore, the steps of detection and integrative sponsorship are as follows:

5.1. Early diagnosis:

Child care has developed tremendously, after the mental medical specialization of child care became a stand-alone specialization, and it is multi-purpose that deals with the treatment of many psychiatric problems of children.

Pediatric psychiatry is not limited to examining the child only when his problem is presented to him, but also includes examining the parents and correcting their psychological, social and parenting condition... where systemic therapy is usually used for this purpose... Through these examinations, early diagnosis is achieved and, thus, early intervention and taking care for this special case take place...²¹

5.2. The family's role:

Parents have the primary duty to discover the talents of their children early on being the primary incubator, by observing and understanding their behavior compared to their cohorts of neighbors and relatives, in terms of linguistic fluency and good management in difficult situations, and then it is also obligatory for them to provide for these creators appropriate capabilities and appropriate conditions of dialogue, respect and mental excitement such as colors, books, magazines, children's stories, and electronic means (CDS) and some tools to practice some motor skills.

Colangelo and Dettmen stated the role of the family in identifying the gifted through several steps, the most important of which are as follows:

- The first step is cooperation with the school by holding meetings with the child's teacher to give him sufficient information about their gifted child, because the teacher will not have enough time to reveal all the gifted children in the class.
- The second step is to hold meetings with the specialist, whether a psychologist, psychological counselor, or others, to provide the gifted child's family with special care in how to properly deal with this child and take care of his special abilities.
- The third step is to resort to sources of support from the community, such as universities and community institutions, especially in providing technical assistance to care for this talented child²².

The French researcher, Jean-Saued Vaclan, indicated in her book entitled: "The Gifted Child" that it is possible for the family to verify the gifted child by testing his exceptional awareness of all his senses, through small experiments that are easy to implement in daily life:

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- **Pictures:** Show your child a picture full of details, suggest that he observes it for a minute and then put it next to him and ask him to name as many objects and items from the picture as possible.
- **Sounds:** Try to close your eyes together for two or three minutes and try to focus on the noise around you. Then ask your child what he heard and compare it to your perception.
- **Smells:** Try to close his eyes and test his recognition of everyday scents from: food, plants, things... and compare his skills!
- **Touch:** It is a fun experience of trying to identify with closed eyes something familiar or even unknown. Normally, the gifted child needs here a less number of touches to know the nature of things²³.

So, the family has a very important role in revealing, developing and nurturing the capabilities of its creative children. The reality has been made clear through previous studies that the families of gifted children face many difficulties, especially with regard to revealing the gifted child, in terms of the availability of sufficient information to realize the nature and characteristics of talent... So, it is necessary for parents in the first years of growth to turn to experienced specialists for more information and mechanisms in dealing with this child, otherwise, he will face many problems, perhaps the most important of which are adjustment disorders which may appear in the form of a behavioral disorder.

5.3. The teacher's role:

The school is the second environment after the family in which the child spends most of his day. It also has a role in detecting and caring for the gifted child through the class teacher who is in direct contact with him, although every educational situation as well as the course of the class affects the learner child in general in all aspects, starting from the nursery school stage to the university stage²⁴.

Dr. Saleh Al-Mahdi Al-Hawij refers to some of the ways in which we reveal talent in school, including, for example:

- Observation:

The teacher can observe and monitor the child's grades, responses, reactions, and the nature of his dialogues with his teachers and peers to reveal his talent through observation and equal opportunities within the classroom in the various educational knowledge and sentimental fields, and it is a prestigious goal that the successful teacher seeks to pursue and achieve, using all technical methods and educational technology to take care of the level of achievement of his students throughout the academic year and even the academic years, in the field of the curricula he teaches. The successful teacher is the one who employs the regulations related to evaluating

students in the cognitive and sentimental fields in a directed and effective way. In spite of the difficulty of playing a guiding role, he must be a careful observer of human behavior, and he must respond positively when the student's emotions hinder him during his learning, and he must also know the appropriate time to refer him to a psychologist asking for help.

The teacher of the gifted is considered an essential pillar in their upbringing and care, so it is suggested by the specialists that he has some characteristics, the most important of which can be summarized as follows:

- His belief in the importance of educating gifted students, and his knowledge of the psychology of these students.
- Finding appropriate teaching methods for these gifted and talented students that are in line with their needs, and delving deeper into discussing and presenting topics.
- Knowing about scientific research, publications and magazines for the gifted.
- Familiarity with the tests that are used to detect gifted students.
- Familiarity with the characteristics of the gifted and their psychological and social characteristics.
- The ability to discover the gifted student among his peers in the class²⁵.

5.4. The role of scientific, cultural and sports clubs:

There should be institutions and bodies that take care of these children and provide their families with material and moral support to unleash their latent energies, because if they are not released, this energy will turn into its negative image in the form of psychological and behavioral disorders.

Conclusion:

From the foregoing, we can say that the gifted child, even if he does not find a way to invest his own abilities and challenge his intelligence, finds it difficult to adapt to his environment, school and society... Therefore, it is more appropriate that all the aforementioned parties should understand him and accept his condition by the family and then the school. This is because the process of detection and sponsorship is not only part of the agenda of one party, and this is through the development of special plans and programs by specialists in psychology and education so that it can successfully adapt to his milieu... Furthermore, in light of the results of the current study, some scientific suggestions can be made by emphasizing the following:

- 1- Reconsidering the tools for detecting gifted children for an accurate diagnosis and ensuring the most effective.
- 2- Building training programs and protocols to ensure that they are commensurate with the abilities of the gifted child, and taking into account the individual differences.

3- Early care of the gifted child after careful detection in the framework of a specialized institution.

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