

## **Identification of Gifted Students: Assumptions and Perceptions of Secondary School Teachers**

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### **Abstract**

Identification of gifted students helps to understand the abilities and potential weaknesses of the students. The school administration may use this information to plan interventions and accommodations to manage the emergent demands of gifted students. The main objective of the study was identification of the students' characteristics that can be used to identify them as gifted students as well as the factors that determine students' level of intelligence. This is not only a valuable striving but a legal and human right of the student as well. There is no considerable effort prevailing in the public sector school system in Pakistan to acknowledge the needs of talented and gifted children. For this study, a questionnaire was developed on a 4 point rating scale and distributed among 600 Respondents who were selected through random sampling method. The study was an exploration of the stakeholders' perspectives about the characteristics of gifted students both in academic achievement and co-curricular activities. The study finds out that Secondary School Teachers (SSTs) use both curricular and co-curricular activities to distinguish gifted students however; teachers also suppose that students' abilities are associated with their examination marks. Identification of gifted students at the right time may prove beneficial for the economy of a country so it is recommended that special arrangements should be taken in the policy for gifted students so that they keep on their track.

**Keywords:** *Gifted students, Secondary school, Education, Talent*

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**Introduction**

Every institute has students of different abilities. Generally, two terms, gifted and talented are used for those students who perform unusually best in their class. This represents the higher array of the ability of the students. The gifted students who possess exclusive strengths and weaknesses are necessary to identify. It is much important for teachers to perceive gifted students in their classes. Moreover, teachers must facilitate students to outshine their intellectual abilities (Gagne, 2005). According to a report of the United States Department of Education's (1993) definition of giftedness stated as "children and youth with outstanding gifts perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment".

Gifted students can perform extraordinary for their country if their educational needs are fulfilled in the institute. However, many gifted students did not perform well in the unconventional education system. Even though both kinds of exceptional students, gifted and talented, are significant; they are the most neglected section of students (SankarDeLeeuw, 2002).

In a formal education setting, the gifted student may become bored. That's why a class teacher should find environmental conditions for the maximum intellectual achievement of gifted students through continuous research (Whitemore, 1980). Morris and fellows (2000) reveal that teachers who recognize the skills of gifted students and who are passionate about improving the skills of the gifted students are influencing the success of the students' education as well as other aspects of the lives of gifted students. These teachers can also significantly affect different aspects of gifted student's life e.g. the social, emotional, and mental development aspects.

There is a lot of debate about why the educational needs of gifted students in different secondary schools cannot be met. Although many reasons can be given for this, more insight can be gained from a broader perspective. Pfeiffer and Petscher (2008) opined that the educational programs that are taught at the secondary level are not compatible with gifted students' needs. Second, during the study, gifted students can easily show outstanding performance in any subject, so they do not need special attention during the class. That's why Bain, Bliss, and Cholate (2007) describe that all that is needed is the policy of teachers and the country to be changed. Pay attention to the special needs that have gifted students so that they are not discouraged. The decisions on the curriculum modification may lie on students' distinctiveness. A study shows that when a teacher comes to know about gifted students' particular ability and give a specific task to that student according to their ability, students can achieve that task in a given time when there is any distinction. Moreover, differentiation will be an obvious response rather than an option (Earl, 2003).

However, Secondary School Teachers must think about improving the abilities of education, further that gifted student's needs should be identified and proper measures are taken. The various curriculum strategies have mentioned the educational capacity of gifted students and have intended to improved different aspects of their lives, and all these steps are done in the monitoring of teachers. The teachers need to know about all aspects of a gifted student's life. The teachers can realize the needs of his students and fulfill the needs of gifted students (Cukierkorn, Karnes, Manning, Houston, & Besnoy, 2007).

According to Panov, (2002) characteristics of gifted students have multidimensional aspects. Gifted students signify a motivational, emotional, and complex cognitive, and rest of the abilities knitted separately. In Pakistan, hardly researchers describe the gifted students with verbal as well as nonverbal abilities. Daniyal Nawaz, Aleem, and Hassan (2011) state that gifted students can perform better in every classroom test. But only a classroom test cannot be proven as a solitary measure to identify gifted students rather than a standardized test for gifted students with all the hidden abilities of gifted students (McWilliam, 2005). According to Marland, (1972) there are six areas of achievement to identify the extraordinary students who must be distinguished and provided with astonishing learning opportunities than the regular program. These include; a) Specific academic capacity, b) general cognitive skills, c) headship quality, d) resourceful thinking, e) psychomotor skill, and f) performing arts.

To identify gifted students, it is important to identify their characteristics and build relationships between them. Only a teacher may be able to identify these students and differentiate them in class if knows all the characteristics of gifted students. The characteristics of talented students are appraised by Grace (2010). According to Daniyal et al. (2011) the students, in the institutions of Pakistan, who are well-performing, are necessary to identify for the progress of the socio-economic development of the society. The results of a research conducted by Dauber and Benbow (1990) suggested that gifted students are more apprehensive than their regular peers in aspects of their social and emotional development. Whitmore (1986) said in one of his research that things influencing the idea of identification of gifted students include culture, personal beliefs, and experiences of their teacher. Students' academic performance, ability to analyze the advantages and disadvantages, also greatly influence teachers' perceptions about gifted students. As a result of instability in the classroom, the learning needs of gifted students may not be well met.

Gifted students traditionally have been underrepresented in education. Most of the secondary school teachers teaching gifted students are unaware of the study requirements of gifted students that are the reasons for the poor gains from gifted students (Whitmore, 1986). So, this research was designed to identify gifted students by secondary school teachers' assumptions and perceptions so that gifted students

distinguished, and extraordinary learning activities were arranged by modifying curriculum and policy for gifted students.

### **Rationale of the Study**

Pakistan is lying among those countries that face intellectual brain drain for the past few decades. Findings of a study (Sajjad, 2011) shows that there is no identification of talent, in the institutions of Pakistan that's why talented and intelligent emigrants are being discouraged. Daniyal et al. (2011) describe that the students, in the institutions of Pakistan, who are well-performing are necessary to identify for the progress of the economic and social development of the society. However, a study conducted by Iqbal et al., (2020) observed that the development of youth particularly in the context of gifted students' entrepreneurship has received relatively little empirical attention. So, it is essential to give a suitable education for gifted students so they can perform better in their life.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Pakistan is far behind in generating special arrangements for gifted students in an institution for their specific education (Sajjad, 2011). Gifted students are essential to identify and treat with special instructional teaching strategies to fulfill their demands for socio-cognitive development (Daniyal et al., 2011). According to Yamin, (2010) a low level of depression is found in gifted children in comparison with the normal students of the secondary schools in Pakistan. Moreover, negative thoughts/Anhedonia, Negative self-evaluation, and depression are relatively low in gifted students of Secondary schools as compared to normal students of the schools (Shahzad & Begume, 2010). However, research studies show that special education is offered only for special students in Pakistan. Many gifted students in the institutions of Pakistan are unidentified and have to learn with other average students. So, it is necessary to find out the ways and techniques used to classify gifted students in the institutions at the Secondary level. This would eventually be helpful to treat them with suitable teaching strategies and care to serve the purpose. Thus the research was conducted to identify gifted students in the light of the perception and perspectives of the secondary school teachers.

### **Objectives**

1. To identify the characteristics that can be used to identify the gifted students.
2. To ascertain the factors that determines students' level of intelligence.

### **Research Questions**

This research was designed to investigate two research questions;

1. What are the perception and criteria of the teachers to identify the gifted students in the classrooms?
2. What characteristics of students are used to consider them as a gifted student by the teachers, in the co-curricular activities?

### Methodology

This research study was intended to collect the opinion of the teachers on the current status of the underlying phenomenon, so this study was descriptive.

#### Population and sampling

The population of the study consisted of all the secondary school teachers of the District Bahawalpur. According to Marguerite and Lodico (2010), the sample is a smaller part of the population to represent the entire population group to apply the study's outcome. For this, 600 secondary school teachers were selected as the sample of the study from District Bahawalpur. The informants were selected through the random sampling method, which included both private and public secondary school teachers of rural and urban areas of district Bahawalpur. Table of SSTs as depicted below shows the total number of respondents and their gender and geographic affiliations. A sum of six hundred questionnaires was distributed among the respondents and 576 questionnaires were received back. The total response rate was 96%, which was considered satisfactory.

#### Research Instrument

A questionnaire was designed for data collection from Secondary school teachers of district Bahawalpur. The tool was developed after a deep review of literature for investigating Subject Specialist Teachers' (SSTs) practices used to identify gifted students in the class as well as outside the class. The responses to the statements were collected on four points rating scale. The validity of the research instrument was ascertained through the review and feedback of experts and specialists in the subject of child psychology and classroom measurement.

Table 1

*Description of Sample of the Study*

Gender			Locality		Total
			Urban	Rural	
Male	School	Public	70	84	154
		Private	74	60	134
	Total		144	144	288
Female	School	Public	92	51	143
		Private	96	49	145
	Total		188	100	288
Total	School	Public	162	135	288
		Private	170	109	288
	Total		332	244	576

### Data Analysis

Data collected from the secondary school teachers of district Bahawalpur and were analyzed by using SPSS (statistical package for social sciences). A mean value and standard deviation were calculated for clear and meaningful picture of the obtained data.

Table 2

*Attributes of students in the classroom used by the teachers as the indicators to identify gifted students*

Sr. No	Statement	Mean	SD
1	Intellectual curiosity	3.12	0.963
2	Interest in the subject.	3.14	0.897
3	The ability to find answers when nobody does it.	3.10	0.937
4	Advanced cognitive skills than most students.	2.05	0.806
5	A critical review of fellows' opinion.	2.92	1.036
6	Taking initiatives.	3.30	0.923
7	Speak more than one language.	2.55	0.902
8	Strong sense of humor in language and gestures.	2.25	0.737
9	Quick Learning.	2.79	1.089
10	Advanced vocabulary beyond their mental age.	2.68	1.010

Table 2 explores the curricular practices of SSTs which they use during classroom teaching to identify gifted students. The case of intellectual curiosity ( $M=3.12$ ,  $SD=0.963$ ) reveals that most teachers use this activity as a prominent indicator for identifying gifted students. Similarly, the majority of teachers use students' interest in the subject ( $M=3.14$ ,  $SD=0.897$ ) as an indicator to identify gifted students. In the same way, maximum teachers consider gifted students who can find the answer quickly in a peer group ( $M=3.10$ ,  $SD=0.937$ ). However, teachers rarely consider a student's cognitive skills ( $M=2.05$ ,  $SD=0.806$ ) and appreciation critically of other's opinions ( $M=2.92$ ,  $SD=1.036$ ) as an indicator for said purpose. But the majority of teachers consider students as gifted who take initiative in various activities ( $M=3.30$ ,  $SD=0.923$ ). All the same, teachers infrequently consider students as gifted who are bilingual ( $M=2.55$ ,  $SD=0.902$ ), have a good sense of humor ( $M=2.25$ ,  $SD=0.737$ ), learn lessons quickly ( $M=2.79$ ,  $SD=1.089$ ), and have vocabulary beyond their mental age ( $M=2.68$ ,  $SD=1.010$ ).

Table 3  
*Identified characteristics of students to recognize gifted ones through co-curricular practices*

S #	Statement	Mean	SD
1	Advanced communication skills.	2.19	0.731
2	Self-motivated.	3.76	0.201
3	Flexible behavior.	2.45	0.952
4	Highly imaginative.	2.39	0.992
5	The high social intelligence level	2.51	0.859
6	Applying their learning in new circumstances	2.22	0.727
7	Comprehension of cause and effect relationships	3.05	0.999
8	Stamina and powers of concentration.	3.50	0.818
9	Focused to achieve agreed targets	2.58	0.918
10	Portfolios for identification gifted students	2.22	0.803

Table 3 shows the result of the characteristics of students in co-curricular activities which SSTs used to identify gifted students. For this, teachers rarely consider gifted students, who use advanced verbal ability in their communication ( $M=2.19$ ,  $SD=0.731$ ). However, the majority of teachers consider those students as gifted, who are self-motivated ( $M=3.76$ ,  $SD=0.201$ ). In the same way, SSTs rarely consider that student gifted, who have flexible behavior ( $M=2.45$ ,  $SD=0.952$ ), highly imaginative ( $M=2.39$ ,  $SD=0.992$ ), have social intelligence ( $M=2.51$ ,  $SD=0.859$ ), and those who can apply their knowledge in new situations ( $M=2.22$ ,  $SD=0.727$ ). But, most of the SSTs indicate those students as gifted, who have an understanding of cause and effect relationship ( $M=3.05$ ,  $SD=0.999$ ) and have stamina and power of concentration in different task completion. ( $M=3.50$ ,  $SD=0.818$ ). Moreover, it's also considered well-supported students ( $M=2.58$ ,  $SD=0.918$ ) as gifted students. Furthermore, teachers hardly use portfolios ( $M=2.22$ ,  $SD=0.803$ ) to classify gifted students.

## Discussion

Gifted students are essential to find especially at the secondary level because after secondary level they have to choose different subject areas and it is necessary to study that particular subject(s) in which students can perform well so they can be fit in that particular subject(s) and can participate in the economic development of a country. Iqbal et al., (2020), Pereznieta & Harding, (2013) described that youth are the backbone of a nation because they contribute well to the economic growth of the country. Therefore, identifying gifted students at the right time leads to the prosperity of the coming generation, which boosts society and the economy. Colangelo (2002) describes that the

results of various researches show that the gifted students in the class accommodate quickly with their peers and enjoy their company. There is a great deal of rationality in both of these ideas and it follows that it depends on the individualities students. Whereas, in the current study, secondary school teachers taught gifted students within the usual group with the same instructions and teaching methods that are the reasons gifted students do not perform with their full potential which leads gifted students to brain waste (Sajjad, 2011).

The current study concluded the strategies adopted by secondary school teachers to identify gifted students within the class. SSTs used both curricular and co-curricular methods to distinguish students while (Daniyal et al., 2011) states that in the educational institutions of Pakistan, students' abilities are associated with their marks on the final exam. Different researches also implicate that co-curricular activities help to identify gifted students. The results of the current study is supported by Marsh and Kleitman (2002), Guest and Schneider, (2003), Daniyal, and Fellows (2011). Identification of gifted students at the right time is beneficial for the economy of Pakistan due to this; the gifted students can be treated with a specially designed curriculum which leads to born highly skilled professionals in the country.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study discloses that secondary school teachers use different parameters to identify gifted students within their class during teaching. Gifted students are essential to identify so that they could be treated with special teaching strategies and can perform with full potential which is beneficial for them individually and for society. For the curricular parameter, mostly teachers of secondary schools considered those students gifted who listen to lectures with keen interest. Moreover, teachers consider students as gifted who show intellectual curiosity during lectures and remain attentive. Furthermore, secondary school teachers also categorize the students as gifted who easily and quickly find answers to new questions in a peer group. According to secondary school teachers, this ability is helpful to distinguish gifted students from others. However, any teacher of the secondary schools of Bahawalpur hardly classified those students as gifted who have vocabulary beyond their mental age.

On the other hand, in co-curricular practices teachers of secondary schools forecast students as gifted who have intrinsic motivation and consider sturdily motivation as a major indicator for gifted students. Besides, the ability to comprehend the relationship of cause and effect is also helpful for the teachers to extricate the students of their classes as gifted. There is another thing which can help teacher to identify the stamina of gifted students and their attentiveness in classroom or outside the class.

On the contrary, secondary school teachers hardly consider those students as gifted who have advanced verbal abilities in communication, flexible behaviors, higher imaginative

abilities, and social intelligence. The secondary school teacher did not show any promising agreement towards the application of knowledge in new situations as a distinguishable parameter for the gifted student. Moreover, most teachers did not use the portfolio as a tool to identify gifted students.

Some recommendations were made based on the results of this study.

- i. As the study concluded that teachers use different curricular and co-curricular practices to identify gifted students it is recommended that teachers should also use cognitive aspects of students as a parameter of gifted identification, for instance, application of knowledge in a new situation. Likewise, teachers should use the portfolio as an identification technique for gifted students. Multiple criteria assessments and exploring techniques may be used to get a comprehensive picture of the characteristics of gifted students. Moreover, to pursue the talents of the gifted in-depth, contextual factors, self-inventory, peer recommendations, parents' comments, and biographic inventory may be part of the portfolio.
- ii. Concluding this research, it is recommended that if there is a large number of gifted students, a super section may arrange in school to treat gifted students differently.
- i. Giftedness may embellish the economy of a country with talented youth if they keep going on their track. So, it is recommended that there should be special arrangements in the policy of education for the super section (gifted students). Also, teachers should arrange suitable teaching methods for gifted students who fulfill their demands potentially. It is also recommended a comparative study may be designed on the teaching methods and achievements between gifted and ordinary students.

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