

Identifying gifted and talented children education essay



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The term gifted and talented is surrounded with a great deal of controversy, and is currently under review by the Coalition Government. A vast amount of research has been undertaken over the last ten years, into the long-term, emotional effects of labelling a child, and the practitioner's role in identifying a child and differentiating the curriculum. Directgov (2010), currently defines 'gifted' as one who excels in academic subjects such as maths and English, and 'talented' as those who possess skills in practical areas such as sport and music.

Pound (2008), discusses how Gardner's theory revolves around eight intelligences. Gardner believes that each individual possesses his or her own unique combination of intelligences, which he calls 'multiple intelligences', which can be enhanced and enriched in an environment which provides stimulating and challenging activities. Teaching, through Gardner's theory enables the practitioner to bring out a gifted and talented child's advanced natural talents, in a challenging way. (Conklin 2007)

Gardner's 'multiple intelligence' theory and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), are mutually supportive. Both emphasise individuality and uniqueness. The DCSF (2008), asserts that every area of development is equally important, and that no child should face discrimination. The DCSF (2008) also explains that the early learning goals give practitioners scope to identify and plan for all children across the developmental continuum. It follows that practitioners must identify children's needs and build on their strengths.

Freeman (1991) advocates that the child who is as 'bright as a button', and maintains their enthusiasm for learning is more likely to make a positive contribution to society. The EYFS has been condemned by the Open Eye Campaign (2007) who claim that it is 'overly prescriptive and potentially harmful to development,' and that many of its goals are 'developmentally inappropriate'.

In comparison to the EYFS the Key Stage One is more academically biased. The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)(2007), reported that two thirds of Year One teachers did not use the information gained from the EYFS to inform practice and planning. Consequently, many 'talented' children may be over looked. Palaiologou (2010), discusses Gardner's view that education should be less academically driven and his 'five minds' theory. This focuses on an individual's ability to sort useful and relevant information in any given situation, how to think 'outside of the box', and to understand diversity, citizenship and community relationships in both the immediate and wider environment. He referred to these as 'modern' day talents.

It is the role of the practitioner to identify and differentiate the curriculum to develop gifted and talented individuals. Failing to do this could have a negative impact on the child. A child may easily lose interest and misbehave when presented with unchallenging tasks. Freeman (2009), questions how a reception class teacher copes with a child who is working at a higher level than their peers. She writes that children should not be left to wait while others 'catch up', and believes that this is where boredom begins, this can result in a child disengaging from learning. Quart (2006) agrees with this fact and believes that there should be more funding available to train
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practitioners in the assessment of and teaching techniques for gifted and talented pupils. Freeman (2010a) states that successful and happy children need consistent. Freeman's research revealed that discovered that children who were identified as gifted and talented in one school would in fact be below average in another. Often practitioners mistakenly identified a child as gifted and talented. She later states that through analysis of collected data she discovered that labelling children as gifted and talented makes a negative 'difference' to their sense of self, resulting in low self-esteem. Children who were labelled by parents suffered more emotional problems than their equally gifted but unlabelled peers.

James (2007), draws our attention to the fact that many parents may be controlling and demanding, claiming that the child becomes fixated with fulfilling parental goals in an attempt to minimise conflict. He explains that high achievement is often a consequence of over parental pressurisation in childhood that often leads to self-criticism and depression in later years. Quart (2006), supports this view and concludes that parents and educators should refrain from pushing children to succeed. She issues a cautionary warning that the pressure placed on the gifted and talented can lead to emotional regrets of being deprived of a childhood. For some who were placed on, a 'pedestal' from an early age reach adulthood and realize they are no longer quite so special. Freeman(2010b), leads us to believe that the media is only interested when things go wrong, and in fact many gifted and talented children go on to lead happy ordinary lives. She states that parents should support and guide children without pushing them to succeed and love should be unconditional and not reliant on achievement.

To conclude, Gardner's theories offer practitioners a model for providing a rich and challenging environment for all children, including those who are gifted and talented. Practitioners need comprehensive training to ensure that planning for learning provides challenges to guarantee children are challenged and stretched, not, bored and pushed. It also Emotional difficulties are more likely to occur when a child is labelled gifted and talented. Therefore, parents and educational practitioners should aim to ensure that an identified gifted and talented child grows into a happy, well-rounded adult. More collaboration is needed between Foundation and Key Stage One. In fact, it would be beneficial to children if the EYFS were continued in Year One. Through this research, a greater insight into the term gifted and talented has been obtained. It offered differing perspectives on the subject, and the conclusion reached was that there is actually a place in society for the gifted and talented, however, identification and education should be undertaken with care and sensitivity.

In the words of Benjamin Franklin,

Hide not your talents. They for use were made. What's a sundial in the shade?

Franklin(1706 - 1790)