Roles of Parents and Teachers in the Identification and Development of Gifted/Talented Students

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Doi:10.5901/ajis.2013.v2n10p25

Abstract

Gifted and talented students are the hinges and future hopes of any human society. They are like precious metals which need to be held tenaciously and nurtured carefully starting with parents at home to teachers in variant classrooms. In the Nigerian context, innumerable gifted and talented students have faded away unnoticed, several are still diminishing each day like a flower, and many more are yet to be spotted out and developed. To this effect, parents and teachers are indispensable in the discovering and developing many hidden gifts and talents of children and students. This essay is a snapshot and attempt to reflect on how parents and teachers can help in the discovering and developing of gifts and talents in so many Nigerian children and students. Furthermore, the author wishes to examine some concepts of some writers regarding gifted/talented students, characteristics of gifted/talented students, ways to identify and assess them, challenges they may face, impacts of undeveloped gifts/talents on individual and society, and some recommendations on what to do to see that no gifted/talented child or student is left behind.

1. introduction

In the perspective of the Nigeria's philosophy of education, "every Nigerian child has a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability." One of the roles of education is to help every student, notwithstanding his or her gender, background, culture, religion, ability, etc., to develop his/her potential to its fullest. Hence, education in Nigeria should endeavour to engage students fully in the learning process and provide varieties of experiences and opportunities for them to thrive. Therefore, every Nigerian child needs all round education in order to develop holistically especially the development of the innate gift(s) each possesses and the acquisition of novel talents. For this reason, all students deserve the opportunities to learn, grow, unfold, and be challenged to strive for academic excellence at all levels of education, in order to become good citizens who are capable of taking right and good decision, able to manage themselves and others.

Within the four walls of schools, there exist varieties of exceptionalities such as "Giftedness," "Talentedness," Mentally challenged, Emotional and Behavioural Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and so on. However, students whether mentally challenged or with exceptional gifts and talents and learning potential require specific knowledge and attention from their parents, teachers, school authority and government, both state and federal. Giving them appropriate attention, careful nurturing of their gifts, ambitions, suitable education, and support are of paramount importance because gifted and talented students have the potential to make a unique and terrific contribution to their various communities and to the society at large. But if they are ignored, they will use their gifts and talents in a wrong way or become delinquent youths and the communities and society in which they live will lose their noble services. Therefore, one should be in accord with the Davis assertion that the consequences for

neglecting the students with extraordinary gifts and talents include loss of academic growth, loss of creative potential, and sometimes loss of enthusiasm for educational success, and professional achievements, thereby losing significant contributions each would have made to the society. Nevertheless, students with other exceptionalities such as ADD or ADHD can reach a great height if appropriate teaching strategies such as differentiated instruction or adapted program and different teaching/students' learning styles are employed. Nonetheless, the main focus of this paper is gifted/talented students and the roles of parents and teachers in their development.

2. Concept of Giftedness and Talentedness

There is no single or universally accepted definition for Giftedness/Talentedness. Consequently, to find a definition of giftedness or talentedness is not as easy as one could imagine because it is based on the particular definition a state, country, school board or region adopts. Hence, the selection process of those to be included in the special services of a gifted program is influenced by the particular definition given by the school board or locality. There are also variant views, ambiguity and inconsistency in the use of the terms gifted and talented. Some people, including experts, use them interchangeably when describing the same person. For instance, people can say that a person is a "talented musician" or a "gifted musician," a "talented artist" or a "gifted artist," a "gifted or talented writer" or scientist. However, some authors such as Davis, Rimm, and Siegle used the word gifted to denote both gifted and talented just for convenience sake. Gifts deal with a special aptitude. It is special aptitude in the sense that it is not attainable by everybody, but by a few. They are naturally innate in human persons, while talents or specific skills "are learned capabilities." Talents deal with specific skill one acquires. In other words, talents are acquired competences.

One might venture to accept the explanations given about the difference between gift and talent, but can ask a question regarding talent. Davis maintains that talents are specific skills one learned, but one may inquire thus: "can a person acquire and develop any talent without an atom of gift of that particular talent in the person?" I can argue that a person is able to acquire a specific skill because there is already a bit of innate gift of that skill in the person. To illustrate it in another way is to say that people are talented because they are gifted, and they are talented differently because they are gifted differently. Some are highly gifted, some are somewhere in the middle, and some are still less gifted. Hence, they need training to bring that bit of gift to its fullest if possible. For example, a person with an iota of gift of something can learn or acquire that skill faster in the training, but the one without any trace of gift of a particular talent may spend hours, weeks, months, and even years to acquire a particular skill which the other person learned in a very limited number of hours. To be more specific, when teaching two different students how to play a musical instrument that is unfamiliar to both of them, you may notice that after few minutes or hours one is already advancing in it while the other cannot make a headway after so many hours or days of lessons and practices. What could be the cause? There is no other reason than that the other person has a bit of gift of that talent hidden in him or her. Therefore, proper experiments or research may be needed to prove that gifts play significant role in the acquisition and development of talents.

Despite the controversial positions on the interpretation and the use of terminologies (gifted and talented), there is a definition that most people, including experts, have generally accepted. It took its root from the definition given by Maryland in the United States' Department of Education. According to this definition, children referred to as gifted and talented are those children that are identified by professionally qualified personnel as having outstanding abilities, capable of high performance, and have demonstrated achievement and/or potential in any of the following areas: general intellectual capability, specific academic aptitude, prolific thinking, leadership ability, visual and performing arts, and psychomotor capability. (As this definition went through reviews, psychomotor capability was dropped). This definition is acceptable to many because it does not

focus on high general intelligence only, but incorporates gifts from different facets such as gifts in specific academic areas, arts, creativity, leadership, and et cetera.

From the Maryland definition, so many other definitions, conceptions, and interpretations emerged. Some of these notions include the IQ definition which sets up a point on the IQ scale and anybody scoring about that fixed point is referred to as a gifted person. Despite the popularity of the IQ definition, it received some criticisms. Many criticized IQ because it does not take into account persons who are highly creative, artistic or gifted in other particular areas. It recognizes only linguistic and logical mathematical types of intelligence. It also underestimates a person's ability. For example, if someone scores one or half a point below the cut-off point (such as 134 or 134.4 out of 135), the person is not regarded as being gifted. In spite of the criticism geared toward IQ test, it cannot be underestimated as one of the good indicators of giftedness. One may agree with the critiques that it cannot be seen as the only way to identify giftedness or seen linguistics and logical mathematical type of intelligence as the only forms of giftedness. Hence, one can suggest that it will be a good move to re-examine the concept of the IQ scale, because one may have a very high IQ, but anything can happen inwardly during the test, and the person will score 134 or 133 instead of 135 or above. Thus, it may be good idea to reset IQ scale in the form of a range. That is, persons seen as gifted or having high IQ can fall within the range of 133 to 135 or higher to accommodate inevitable or unforeseen circumstances.

Another concept worthy of mention is Gardner's *Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (MI). Gardner argues that every one of the intelligences has a neurological basis, a unique set of core operations, and its own symbol system. An example can be seen in the ability in language, numerals, and musical notation. Some intelligences are correlated with others such as mathematical and musical ability, linguistics and sports ability. According to MI theory, students can excel in the following areas: linguistics, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, spatial, naturalistic, musical, bodily kinaesthetic, and technological. Just as other definitions such as IQ, Gardner's theory also underwent some criticisms. One criticism is that "more than ten years after it was introduced, it has yet to be firmly grounded in research." Some critiques argue that it is faddish but did not explain why it is faddish.

In my own perspective, gifted and talented students are those students who from birth have inherited from their creator special distinctiveness which differentiates them from their peers and makes them first among equals. Gifted and talented students are not only those who are uniquely endowed with rare possibilities, but also those who have the ability to persevere in reaching the full realization of those gifts and talents. I am maintaining this view of perseverance because it is one thing to have gift or talent, but it is another thing to live up to it. Thus, many geniuses in our world today work round the clock to uphold their claims. This entails that teachers and parents need to encourage and spur their students and children to pursue their gifts and talents with determination and passion. Having examined the different definitions and conceptions of giftedness and talentedness, one might inquire about the characteristics those termed as gifted and talented exhibit.

3. Characteristics of Students who are Gifted or Talented

There are so many good qualities students who are gifted or talented portray. Some of these attributes include unusual alertness in infancy and later, early and rapid learning, rapid language development as a child, superior language ability (verbally fluent, large vocabulary and complex grammar), academic superiority, large knowledge base, superior analytic ability, reasoning, and high-capacity memory, high curiosity and exploration (for example, having interest in new topics, going beyond what was taught and exploring how and why), high career ambitions, active in getting and sharing information, enjoying learning, reading, asking many and critical questions, motivating others, demonstrating self-confidence, thriving on complexity and becomes unusually upset at injustice, criticizing works for self and others, making sophisticated use of techniques and

media, discussing in detail, enjoying debating, relating well with adult, etc. As students who are gifted or talented have so many good qualities, they also have some impediments. However, due to the limit and nature of this paper, their negative traits will not be discussed. Instead, ways to identify and assess hidden gifts and talents will be discussed. Nova Scotia Department of Education (NSDE) observes that there is no one profile of a gifted learner, and maintains that not all the characteristics of gifted and talented students are seen at a given time. Hence, if all the gifts and talents cannot be portrayed at a stretch, how then, can the hidden ones be seen or spotted out and who will be responsible for the identification and assessment?

4. Ways to Identify and Assess Gifted and Talented Students

Some talents and gifts are already developed and can easily be recognized in classrooms because students had been given the opportunities to express them in the curricular and extracurricular activities that were offered in schools, while some are still hidden and can only be identified when students are exposed to various domains and “hands-on” experiences that are not offered within the curriculum. Since there is no one general way of viewing a gifted student, it is important that parents and teachers have the knowledge of the different characteristics of giftedness and talentedness in order to pinpoint them when students exhibit them.

5. Effective Enrichment Program

As already mentioned, students with gifts and talents may not show all of these characteristics at any given period. For this reason, to identify them, schools through teachers need to provide and implement school-wide effective enrichment program in order to provide opportunities for students to manifest and develop their hidden gifts and talents. The effective enrichment program will aim at offering challenge, and support the growth in students’ observable gifts and talents. It will also aim at providing new and different experiences to enable all students to reveal their hidden gifts and talents.

Additionally, the process of identifying and assessing students with gifts/talents should be holistic because people are gifted or talented differently. One may be academically very outstanding or artistically gifted in music and not so good in Math or Science. Another may be gifted in Hockey sport or basketball, but performs poorly academically. If only academic aspect is considered, the sportive aspect will be neglected and since the student cannot measure up academically, he or she may end up as a drop-out.

6. High Standard Curriculum

There is another means of recognizing potentials in students who are gifted, especially those gifted, but are underachieving because they do not have access to proper challenging curriculum that would help to bring out their gifts to surface. Jane M. Jarvis, in her article argued that “high-quality curriculum” can play a great role in the unmasking process of different gifts and talents that students possess. She maintained that if the curriculum and education accessible to all students do not engage, challenge, offer appropriate support, and highlight different strengths and potentials, students’ gifts/talents will likely remain dormant regardless of the particular identification tools used. She added that high quality curriculum designed for gifted education needs to respond to significant advance performance, and to uncover and foster hidden potential. It still remains a teacher’s primary role to see that the curriculum he/she is using is of good quality. Hence, teachers should be involved in the development of a curriculum or scheme he/she will use for his/her class so as to make it meet the needs of gifted students. The work he/she gives to gifted students must challenge them. He/she must give them advanced materials that go beyond what would be taught in their regular grade-level classrooms. Otherwise, they will be bored and dwindled away. The

curriculum the teacher designed for gifted students must take into account what is being studied as well as the processes that the teacher uses to engage his/her gifted students. The teacher can employ higher level thinking process, creative skill, problem solving, and research skill strategies when assigning and assessing students' work. Appropriate modifications should be made for all students, and the outcome should be a curriculum that works more effectively to challenge and help students to perform at higher levels and provide opportunities for the development of different potentials. Furthermore, the assumption that "giftedness is multifaceted," and can be manifested differently in individuals and that it can be latent, should be a guiding principle to teachers in the curriculum planning for uncovering of hidden gifts. As it is necessary to unmask, assess, and nurture students' hidden gifts and talents, it is also very crucial to note that gifted and talented students can encounter some difficulties along the way.

7. Obstacles or Challenges Facing Gifted Students

The obstacles or challenges gifted students might face include social isolation. Gifted students may face social isolation because often they have difficulty in social interactions with their class mates. Students or children with gifts and talents can appear to be defiant toward authority and class mates. For example, in classroom, they can interrupt or argue with the teacher by taking exception to what is being taught. They have strong sense of communal justice and morality. Hence, they challenge the oversimplifications and common assumptions. They can also argue against their class mates' responses to a particular question in the classroom. They are quick in giving response to any question thrown to the whole class, and can think very critically. They can also be domineering in their answers and very political. Hence, they are not so much liked by their peers because they seem to be threats to them. They can go extra miles to achieve their optimistic goals. Teachers have a great role to play here. They need to help them to strike at a balance and be a bit tolerant to others who are not as gifted as themselves. Teacher should help them understand that everybody in the class have equal right to participate fully and air their own perspectives in class.

A gifted student tends to mask his/her gift because he/she often finds him/herself in an awkward situation in which he/she begins to perceive that his or her outstanding knowledge makes others, especially age or classmates uncomfortable. Sometimes he/she is being called all sorts of names such as "I know it all" (IKA), "seekinee" or attention seeker whenever he/ she talks. For this reason, his or her difference by others is potentially discrediting because his/her knowledge interferes with normal social interactions. He/she cannot interact freely with others because his/her way of reasoning does not concur with others. Hence, he/she will try to camouflage in order to fit in with peers or those around him/her. In my opinion, this mask can be very detrimental because a lot of gifted students can go unidentified.

8. Cultural Issues/Gender Equity

In some cultures, females are not allowed to attend school. Their territory and workplace end in their mothers' kitchens and backyard. They cannot speak openly as their male counterparts. In some cultures, girls can attend schools, but may not have equal rights as boys in terms of speaking publicly and taking some kinds of subjects in schools. In such a situation, females that are gifted or talented will never thrive or find their proper positions in the society. Thus, they can suppress their gifts and abilities due to social structures and expectations for males and females. This can lead them to develop a very low self-esteem and become underachieved because they tend to live and act in accordance to the stereotype constructed for them by the culture. Furthermore, gender equity can be an issue at stake. Equity means fairness in treatment, giving people their due share, respect, right, etc. As some females may experience discrimination and maltreatment, teachers can help to better the situation by ensuring that both males and females have an equal share of the teacher's attention, creating an inclusive classroom and including questions that ask both males

and females to use analytical and higher-order of thinking, and praising or criticizing both males and females and accepting male and female staff/students contributions as equally valid.

9. Fear of Being Different

Sometimes students hide their gifts for the fear of being stigmatized as gifted. Sometimes, peers can become jealous and bully gifted them due to their outstanding performance. The above named obstacles may have some impact on students. The students in question might begin to shy away and stop performing as they should, especially if they do not have backbone. In my mathematics class, there is one boy who has been taking first position since his Junior Secondary School to Senior Secondary School. Each time he stood up to answer question, other students will murmur, trying to shun him down, but he never relent from answering questions and excelling. In contrast to him there was another boy in the same class who is very intelligent too, but fears his peers due to yelling at him. He has been taking second or third and sometimes seventh position. But I know very well that he is a potential candidate for first position, but due to the fear of other class mates, he does not work hard as he should. Any teacher in that situation has a duty to stand up for justice and give necessary correction, admonition, and proper education concerning bullying, intimidation, envy, jealousy, and their consequences. He/she should help the bullying students understand that everyone is specially gifted in one way or the other. Hence, they should work towards discovering their own gifts and try to develop them rather than envying another person.

10. Environment and Chance Issues

Many gifted students have not developed their gifts to the fullest due to the issues of good environment and chance. One may be highly gifted, but he/she is not in a conducive environment. Also, a student may not be able to get opportunity that can help him or her develop the gift he/she has. For example, in a country like Nigeria, so many students are exceptionally gifted in music, sports, arts, and other academic areas, but lack able teachers and musical instruments to help them reach their potential. There was no provision for them, particularly students in the remote domain. Hence, many gifts have just decayed away without any means of fostering them. It is only a few whose parents are rich or have somebody at the "top seat" may manage to find their way out to realize their aspirations. Having explored the different conceptions of giftedness and talentedness, their characteristics, ways of identification, some challenges and hindrances that might emerge, examining some specific roles parents and teachers can play in the identification and development of gifted and talented students become paramount important.

11. Roles of Parents/Teachers in the Identification/Development of Gifted and Talented Students

The primary role of both parents and teachers in the identification and development of gifted students is the knowledge of the concepts and characteristics of students who are gifted. This is important because knowing what it means to be gifted student and the early signs of giftedness will be of great help to parents and teachers in the early discovering and development of those students who are gifted.

12. Parents' Roles

It is essential to involve both parents/guardians in the process of the identification of gifts especially in the case of very young children. This is because students may not portray their gifts in the school setting, but may do so at home where they are more acquainted and comfortable with the environment and their parents. Parents are the primary teachers or educators of their children.

For this reason, they should be very vigilant in observing extraordinary behaviours as they interact with their children, especially at the infancy since some of the signs of giftedness are unusual alertness in infancy, early and rapid learning, and rapid language development as a child.

13. Funding of Gifted/Talented Students' Education

Funding of their tuitions and other bare necessities that will enable them reach their potentials is very essential duty. Notwithstanding, sometimes a gifted student may not be from a very well-to-do family. In such case, parents must not shy away and allow their child's gifts to rot away. They can obtain loan from bank or seek for help from friends so as to support their child's training. They can equally beckon on government to assist or start early enough to make some savings towards the education of their child, especially when they notice the uniqueness of their child.

Apart from providing funds, parents/guardians should give moral support and encouragement to their child. It is their duty to find appropriate schools and check their children after school period to ensure that they do the homework assignments given to them by their teachers. They should make sure that their children are receiving proper and comprehensive education, eating good balanced and healthy diet to enable their brain to function properly and retain when they study.

14. Teachers' Roles

Just as parents are the primary educators of their children, teachers are both primary and secondary educators. Consequently, teachers have the role of identifying unique performances displayed in their classrooms by their students in order to help them unfold and develop them. As identification should be based on general intellectual ability, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, creativity, and leadership, it is the duty of a teacher to take into consideration students' interests when developing enrichment programs for gifted students. It is vital to explore students' personal interests because their intrinsic motivation, skill development, and performance are enhanced when their areas of personal interests are involved. Some of the ways teachers may find out students' interests are through conversation, formal interviews, and interest inventories. The use of interview is very essential because it will help the teacher to get further insight in identifying the student's characteristics and interests that were not visible or easily measurable in the classroom setting. The key aims of the interview are to explore the student's responses to questions concerning his/her motivation, learning style, creativity, and problem solving ability. Additionally, every teacher should endeavour to have deep knowledge of the Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences already discussed.

15. Creating a Good Conducive Learning Environment

It should be a number one responsibility of any teacher to create a good conducive learning environment. I maintain that creating a good conducive learning environment is of paramount importance because a good conducive learning classroom together with good teacher-student rapport, good cooperation and healthy social interaction will promote learning, creativity, leadership skill, and cultural understanding. When students feel safe, loved, appreciated, heartened, and reinforced in their efforts to outclass in their studies, sky will be their limit especially the gifted ones.

16. Provision of Appropriate Activities

As already specified, Kanaita observed that academically gifted students set themselves apart from the other students because of their amazing knack to grasp ideas, organize them effectively and make use of them appropriately. Hence, teachers have the task of searching for activities that

can challenge gifted students. Teachers also need to know the appropriate ways to use those activities so that gifted students can fully benefit from them. Gifted students are likely to have extra time in class because of their smartness. They can finish their class work before the stipulated time or before others. As result, teachers need to get extra works ready for gifted students or give them an activity such as asking them to creatively develop something by exploring further the current topic they are studying. A teacher can ask a gifted student to do things such as carrying out an inquiry research project or designing something using computer in a particular area of interest and share with his/her peers in their classrooms by way of power-point presentation or movie. This will help the student to develop critical thinking, organizational, problem solving, creativity, and leadership skills. Thus, teacher will only play the role of a moderator and facilitator helping students to discover and choose the right information by themselves. In addition, students who are gifted or talented can be requested to represent their schools at local or state level and even at a national or international level in quiz, music, dance, or debate competition. This act or opportunity will expose them and will widen their horizons.

17. Control over Gifted Students via Independent Projects

As gifted students tend to finish their assigned work very quickly, some may become disruptive in the classroom when they are not actively engaged. To avoid all the troubles and to keep them focused in their learning, teacher has a role of modifying his/her curriculum to suit the gifted students by providing them with independent projects. This may require some time for planning, but the outcome will be very rewarding. When given independent project, teacher should try to avoid giving similar work as a gifted student may not be willing to do something relating to what he/she has already done and mastered. Hence, teacher can compact the curriculum so that gifted students can skip assignments especially things they are already capable of doing. While the rest of students are completing work that can be skipped by the gifted students, teacher can give them independent projects in place of other classroom work. Independent projects can be given in any subject area in accordance with the curriculum outcomes. There is also a need to give the students a check list of what the teacher is expected of them. For example, in a Language Arts classroom where there are gifted students, they can be asked to work in groups of two or independently to do a research on the time line of the current novel being studied, to prepare a Power Point presentation on the plot, symbols, and mood of the novel being studied, a bulletin board of the main characters in a novel or the themes, or a skit, music or dramatic production of the climax or conflict in the novel being studied.

18. Use of Tiered Instruction

Sometimes, teachers make the common mistake of turning gifted students into classroom "tutors" instead of challenging them. It is the duty of a teacher to realize that gifted students are just like any other exceptional student. So, they need an education that is individualized and goal oriented in order to help them reach their maximum potential. Teachers have a role of applying various teaching methods and strategies to ensure that gifted students are fully engaged to attain their academic excellence. Some of the strategies for engaging gifted students include tiered instruction, provision of a learning center, mentorships, acceleration, and curriculum compacting. Tiered lessons and assignments are processes in which a student works with the same essential ideas and outcomes and use the same key skills, but works at different levels of complexity and open-endedness. In such situation, the emphasis is on the concept rather than learning differences. Teacher has the duty to decide the technique for different tiers. He/she may want the varying tiers to be based on the students' readiness, ability, interest in a topic, or preferred learning style. It is the teacher's role to conduct diagnostic test or assessment in order to develop a lesson or activity accordingly and make adjustment when necessary into different tasks at variant levels of

understanding. Tiered tasks and assignments are vital because they provide gifted students the opportunity to produce ideas, reflect on their intellectual needs, work in areas of interest, and develop higher-level thinking skills.

19. Provision of Good Learning Center and Academic Acceleration

It is teacher's role to provide a good learning center to enable students to engage in activities designed to extend their learning and thinking skills, and to provide the opportunities for creativity and excellent production as they investigate particular topics and issues. It is also the duty of a teacher to learn how to apply acceleration practice which helps gifted students meet their curriculum outcomes at a faster pace. It takes place when a student has advanced beyond age, appropriate coursework and/or grade-level groupings. Acceleration may occur within the classroom, the school, or outside school, and can be done through acceleration by subject or grade, advanced courses, advanced placement, curriculum compacting, early admission to post-secondary study, extracurricular activities outside school hours, use of mentors to provide support beyond the classroom activities, et cetera.

20. Encouragement and Support to Risk Taking

Gifted students fear failures and humiliations. They can be over anxious and sensitive. Consequently, they try to avoid any task they feel they might not excel. Teachers have great role to play by letting them understand that failures are not bad occurrence all through. Sometimes, they can be a stepping stone to a great height. Hence, teachers should encourage them to take up hard tasks.

21. Use of Multiple and Correct Forms of Assessments and Evaluation

Without doubt, it is a teacher's role to know and use multiple and correct forms of assessments that will help him or her in the identification, instruction, progress, and evaluation of students who are gifted. Hence, gifted students' teachers need to be very conversant with the diagnostic assessment, formative, and summative assessment. In other words, their identification process should come from different sources and different assessment strategies namely, assessment for learning, assessment of learning, and summative assessment. Some of the sources of data for identification and assessment include anecdotal observations from teachers, parents and guardians, peers, mentors, and students themselves, developmental history such as parents' descriptions of the child's exceptional abilities and interests, examples of the student's creativity, achievement and aptitude tests which measures specific knowledge and skills in a particular area such as report card grades and a student's natural talents or special abilities for doing or learning how to do certain kinds of activities, intelligence or cognitive tests including off-level testing, demonstrations of creative and critical thinking such as journals and learning logs, "Off-level testing" which measures a student's performance beyond a particular grade level; this type of test is given when student is discovered to be two or four grade level above his/her age or classmates. In this case, the classroom assessments designed for higher grade levels or "above grade-level benchmark is used to evaluate the performance and the product.

22. Some Impacts of Untrained or "Suffocated" Gifts or Talents on Individual and Society

It might interest you to know that inherent gifts can be a two-edge sword in the sense that they can make the life of the gifted individual terrific and exciting or miserable. When gifts are identified at early stage and are well nurtured, great will be the fruits, but if neglected, one may end up

tragically. Thus, it is deemed appropriate to comment briefly on the impacts of untrained or "suffocated" gift on those concerned and on the society at large. One might like to ask the following questions: How can a gift be suffocated in a child or student? Is that possible? The answer is yes. As mentioned previously, neglecting the students who are gifted would lead to the loss of academic growth, loss of creative potential, etc., and significant contributions each would have made to the society. In other words, the country will lose valuable personnel, remain underdeveloped or lagging behind in the competitive world as compared to the contemporary society. It will suffer from shortage of labour and loss of income tax it would have collected from these gifted students when they start to work.

On the part of the individual, there will be psychological impacts. The student may remain unhappy because his or her interest is unjustly denied him or her. Consequently, the student may be under-rated or placed in the areas of studies he or she is not proficient and the outcome will be over stress because the student will insert more energy than usual, working round the clock. A student may exhibit an aptitude of extraordinary gift, but teachers or formators, or the person in authority will smother it. He or she may choose to ignore it or use intimidation and suppression to block it from being developed. Even when the student makes an honest effort to manifest the gift and make some outstanding production due to the innate gift that is in him/her, people tend to see nothing, but look for ways of suppressing these gifts. The gifted student may end up suffering or developing stomach ulcer, chest pain, constant migraine headache because the bottled gift is boiling within, looking for a way out. Thus, some many gifts in some young people in our country, Nigeria are under-developed or "suffocated" due to fear, shyness, culpable ignorance, neglect, envy, or negligence on the parts of those responsible to make the training take place. Furthermore, I would like to propose the following few recommendations:

23. Recommendations

The first point of the recommendation is knowledge of differentiated instruction. Each trained teacher should have, at least, a basic knowledge of special education and the use of differentiated instructions in classroom settings to enable each student benefits from the lessons and develop fully his or her gifts. Differentiated instruction will also help a teacher to know the ability of each student in his or her class and be able to help each student to discover his areas of strength and pursue it.

A second point of recommendation is the provision of subsidies and mandatory extracurricular activities. Government or school authority should make a provision for and mandatory extracurricular activities in every school both public and private. This will provide opportunity for students to try their abilities in various areas and go for the ones for which they are more competent. Hence, provision of things such as musical instruments (pianos, guitars, violins, clarinets, flutes, trumpets, recorder, et cetera) and sports equipment and crafts, drama club, cultural dancing club, modernism club where students do hands on activities such as assembling of cars, planes, computers using toys-like objects. Government should also provide enough funds for scholarships or loans for both males and females gifted students in particular those of them that are from indigent families. Government should provide equal opportunities in all aspects of education for both male and females. Identification process needs to be accessible to all students irrespective of the gender, cultural background and social status. Strategies use in the identification should include both qualitative and quantitative information

24. Conclusion

In conclusion, I cannot pretend to have exhausted this topic, but maintain that it is a very vast and interesting aspect of exploration and discovery which needs more time to digest the key areas of interests. Giftedness is "multifaceted" or complex. It can manifest itself differently in various

individuals and groups. For this reason, all hands should be on deck to see that no gifted child, especially in Nigeria, is left behind due to poverty, tribe, race, ethnicity, social status, and environment. Teachers, parents/guardians, school administrators, and other school personnel should strive to ensure that no gift slips away unnoticed regardless of individual background. Appropriate techniques should be used to see that hidden gifts are unmasked, nurtured, enhanced, and supported to its fullest realization.

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