Why is it important to work with gifted children from an early age?

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Young people

Research

Online materials
Lectures
Project work

Associate Tutors/CPD

Class initiatives
School initiatives
EA initiatives
CPD
Conferences
Publications
Reflection units

Parents

Online forums
Parents’ conference
Advice to parents

Online materials
Lectures
Project work

• Action research
• Research bids
• Publications
• Conferences

• Class initiatives
• School initiatives
• EA initiatives
• CPD
• Conferences
• Publications
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• Advice to parents
Respecting and responding to human differences in ways that include rather than exclude learners.
Early Childhood Education (ECE) has come to the attention of policy makers across the globe as they have recognised:

• the important role it plays in supporting young children as they grow and develop (Pascal & Bertram, 2001),

• longer term positive impact on social capital (Stephens, 2010).
• Basing much of their work on three high profile longitudinal studies (Schweinhardt, 2003; Ramey et al., 2000 and Reynolds, 2000) Heckman and Masterov (2005) argue that intervention in the early years will improve the life chances of the most vulnerable thus leading to sizeable savings in later years.
• Developing countries should invest in the first 6 years of a child’s life if they are serious about reducing inequality
• Has it has less to do with the development of young children and more to do with getting their parents back into employment?
  (Baldock et al., 2005; Flett, 2008).
• Policy makers began to view children as ‘the direct objects of policy development and not just the secondary beneficiaries of family policy’
  (Campbell-Barr, 2010, pg 166).
• Policy is developed to enhance life chances (Alcock et al., 2004) thus early years policy is enmeshed in wider policies that relate to, among other things, economy, education and health
  (Randall, 2000).
• These policies brought about far-reaching changes to curriculum and pedagogy (Nutbrown and Clough, 2006).

• At the heart of these policies was the desire to tackle a range of social issues such as drug and alcohol addiction, teenage pregnancy, poverty and ill-health (Weinberger et al., 2005).
The sharp focus on early years is therefore part of a wider policy agenda related to reducing social exclusion, advancing educational outcomes and raising attainment and reducing poverty.
Gifted education is often misconceptualised as an issue of elitism and exclusivity (Winstanley, 2004), only a consideration of the financially advantaged and already privileged few.
• To consider perpetuating such a system seems unthinkable to many and consequently there is considerable resistance to identifying and providing for these children.  

  (Tomlinson, 2008)

• Provision for these children is seen as advantaging an already advantaged group, which clearly demonstrates just how misunderstood this cohort are and the misconceptions which exist about where you will find them.
Koshy and Robinson’s (2006) review of the literature argued that of all the children with “special needs”, younger gifted children are the group most frequently ignored not just in the UK but internationally.
• Special Educational Needs and Gifted Education - rooted in the deficit model?
Parents’ views

- We just find it one long battle.
- Getting the right school for our children shouldn’t have to be a battle but it is
- School staff didn’t read the reports coming from his pre-school so it was like starting all over again
- There is just not enough attention to the quality of the teaching
• Too many teachers don’t have the experience to manage our kind of children
• Lip service is being paid to inclusion but there is no real change
• League tables are seen as more important than our children
• Children’s Rights for All Country Reports: UK
• Quotes from 2 Mencap parent groups
• A leading UK charity for people with learning disabilities. Mencap is the voice of learning disability. Everything we do is about valuing and supporting people with a learning disability and their families and carers.
“More Able = Gifted Academically”.

“Teacher willing but unsure about what to do”.

“Not willing or able to do anything”.

“Just be given extra work”.

“School think you are pushy parents and the general public think you are elitist”.

“Everything has to be negotiated and re-negotiated”.
• Knowing
• Believing
• Doing

(Rouse, 2008)
• Uses advanced vocabulary or asks about a new word heard in a story and then practices that word.
• Uses metaphors or analogies
• Spontaneously makes up songs.
• Creates symmetrical patterns with blocks or in drawings.
• Modifies his or her language when talking to younger children.
• Can put together difficult puzzles.

• Has skill in ordering and grouping.
• Has an adult sense of humour, makes up clever jokes.
• Makes connections between past and present experiences.
• Sensitive to the needs or feelings of others.
• Can carry out complex instructions.
• Is unusually attentive and notices subtle changes in the environment.
• Uses verbal skills to handle conflict.
• Becomes totally absorbed in one kind of knowledge, is an "expert" (trucks, dinosaurs).

• Adapted from Roedel, W.C., Jackson, N.W. and Robinson, H.B. (1980).
One hallmark of highly able children for instance, is asynchronous development, where intellectual, physical and emotional maturity progresses at uneven rates. Children may have the intellectual ability of a 7 year old and the emotional maturity of a 4 year old.
• My abilities are misunderstood
• Stuff we do is boring/too easy
• I’ve got few friends
• I’m expected to get everything right
• They don’t like me, I know more than they do

• I’ve got no time left for fun
• I’m expected to do what everyone else does and then special stuff
• They don’t know I’m really good at something
• I’m singled out and different
It’s like feeding an elephant grass, one blade at a time. Not only will he die of malnutrition before you can get sufficient food into him, he is unlikely to realize you are trying to feed him at all. That single blade of grass is simply too small to notice.

(Stephanie Tolan)
A thought!

The better we get at providing for highly able children, the better we get at identifying
Identification Methods

- teacher observation
- parent nomination
- peer/self nomination
- checklists
- National tests
- subject specific tests
- standardised tests
Assessment

- A predefined set of skills?
- The process is more important than the product?
- Extra practice at weak skills?
- Identify gaps and plug them?
- Developing learning dispositions?
- Successful completion of task means child is ready for next stage/will do well at school?
- Allow for experimentation with resources?
- No one end point?

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Assessment is for learning
Observation

Peers

Parents

Child
Conflicting Narratives

Gifted and talented child

I can do this standing on my head, in fact I think I might just do that!

Parents

I don’t think they believed me when I said he’s good with numbers. They just talked about his behaviour.

Teacher

He can’t work with a group. He’ll have to learn to behave.

Legislation and Policy

Children will receive a challenging education.
I want to know more about numbers

Using different mathematical materials has really challenged him

Staff are thinking about ways to challenge his ability with numbers

Children will receive a challenging education
• Opportunities to grow and develop
• Katz, L. (1993) *Dispositions and Educational Goals* Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Childhood Education


