

elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries."

Art. 29:

- "1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
- a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
 - b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
 - c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
 - d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all people, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
 - e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

2. No part of the present article 28 shall be constructed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principles set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State."

GIFTEDNESS AS A RISK

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If no support is offered to a handicapped child, it is personal tragedy for the child and for his/her family; if no support is offered to a gifted child, it is a tragedy for the whole society.

THE PROBLEM

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child focuses especially on their rights to receive an adequate education aimed at full development of their abilities and talents and at the growing up of their personalities. The population of gifted children has its specific needs which are very often neglected by the educational system and therefore, those children's rights of being supported by the social institutions in their intellectual and personal development are violated, although unconsciously.

What really put gifted children at risk is the widespread public opinion that gifted and talented children have no psychological problems. This opinion is not only wrong, but even dangerous. Research works, school observations and guidance and counselling practice have shown that these individuals might experience severe psychological difficulties, related to their intellectual superiority. As a philosopher said, "*There is no heavier burden than a great potential*". (Harding and Berger, 1979) Talented children need to be supported and their development should not be left to chance. We must find our gifted children, give them the chance to grow into talented adults and help them so that they can give society all those things which it so desperately needs.

CAUSES FOR CONCERN

The presentation summarizes the author's experience in the field of gifted education and creativity. Research data and observations are analyzed with the purpose to identify factors, which in the Bulgarian cultural and educational context, put gifted children at risk: stereotyped images of the sex-role appropriateness of the behaviour; teachers' perceptions about gifted children and gifted education; relationships with peers. Their negative impact on children's motivation, self-concept and value-system are examined. On this basis the need of special educational and psychological provisions for gifted children will be emphasized.

Dependence versus independence

Personality studies with 16-18 years old students with outstanding in-school and out-of-school achievements have shown that their self-concept, as that of the other boys and girls, is dominated by values like personal autonomy, love, friendship and criticism to social injustice; they deny the value of personality characteristics like "being disciplined" and "sticking up to adults' requirements". At the same time, compared to their peers, they exhibit more stronger dependence on norms and evaluative standards posed by the world of the adults: their self-concept shows greater correspondence with norm-referred expectancies of parents and teachers; they are anticipating a higher level of adults' requirements for themselves; they score lower on need for independence; as the knowledge is highly valued and the school constitutes a powerful source of knowledge, teachers' norms are more easily incorporated in gifted students' values and behaviour.

This seems quite inappropriate compared to results that have been obtained in personality studies of eminent creators. But other authors reported similar to our findings with secondary students and suggested their interpretation on the basis of students' social status. (MacKinnon, 1978)

Society is more tolerant to the unconventionality of the acknowledged creators than to the striving for recognition gifted adolescent. Students with high-level achievements are still students and they are not easily allowed to behave in a different way. Gifted adolescents are neither independent from the world of the adults nor are accepted as equals to adult creators. The ambivalence of this social position hinders the process of self-identification as a creative personality in them and that might be crucial for their further development.

The price for being different

Gifted adolescents have a significantly higher need for achievement. They are attracted by the possibilities the active professional life and the interesting work are providing for personal development and acknowledgment. Gifted student's personality is centred around the idea of self-actualization through development and implementation of one's gifts and abilities. They mostly value characteristics like "readiness to attack difficult problems", "inventiveness", "curiosity", "breadth of interests", "ambitiousness", "originality and flexibility in thinking" in themselves. In their **Ideal Self** they stress on improved effectiveness and work habits, rationalism and industriousness. So achievement orientation and task commitment are revealed to dominate in the self-concept of the gifted students. And that is exactly what makes them different.

The other boys and girls are giving their preference to good interpersonal relations and satisfying social contacts as a field of one's self-realization. They are interested in qualities like "politeness", "good manners", "sense of humour", "emotional stability", "sociability", "responsiveness", "understanding of the others" and they consider them as a principal criterion of personal worth.

Due to these differences, gifted students often have problems in their search for peer acceptance. When we compared **Real** and **Ideal Selves** of the gifted students, greatest differences were observed in the ratings of the characteristics related to sociability and making friends: according to their own estimation, that is what gifted students are mostly lacking.

Similar findings were reported by Eccles, Bauman and Rotenberg (1989). They found intellectually gifted students aged 7 to 14 to be superior in peer acceptance in the academic field, but not in social and sports activities. These students were also superior in school self-esteem, but did not differ from average IQ children in measured attitudes towards the self in the relations with peers and parents.

Gifted students in general do not enjoy greater self-acceptance and self-confidence, although they have positive self-concept and higher self-esteem.

To be or not to be a gifted girl?

The lack of appropriate role models for self-identification is another problem, experienced by the gifted youngsters, especially by girls. The question "to be or not to be a gifted individual?" seems to be a fact and not a fiction for them. Why?

We know that sex-role appropriateness of the behaviour is subjected to the strongest cultural stereotypization. In our culture task orientation and orientation towards achievements are still considered to be mainly a sign of male-appropriate behaviour and not to be female-convenient features. Because of that preference for intellectual activities and high-level achievements are usually considered to be a departure from the socially approved "female" behaviour and are often interpreted as a lack of individual resources to fit the sex role requirements. At least this is the way it is very often interiorized by the gifted girls. Unaware of other options available, these girls just assumed they have to choose between either pursuing their interests or being a "true" woman, as the other girls are. They estimate themselves as less beautiful and less attractive than the other girls do; they also assign significantly lower value to "family happiness" as a life goal.

These findings show us that this population is experiencing severe psychological difficulties when trying to bring to terms social expectancies for being a girl and its own interests and motivations. Gifted girls have to pay

greater psychological price for being both a girl and a gifted individual. They do not know how to deal with what appear to be a dilemma for them - career or family. And the society is even sharpening this juxtaposition rather than helping them in their sometimes painful fight for self-identity and complete self-actualization.

Facing the same kind of problems, Hading and Berger (1979) organized a Future Images Seminar for high school gifted girls which got them together to meet outstanding career women and to discuss with them options in combining successfully career, marriage and family. The evaluation of the outcomes of the Seminar stress the need for appropriate career education programmes for gifted young women.

Is creativity a value?

Pupil's response

Gifted subjects we studied are both scoring higher creativity and innovativeness and valuing higher creativity as a life goal. Embedded in leading values, creativity has its positive influence on students' high-level performance by providing its evaluative justification and by supporting one's efforts in cases of temporary failure.

In terms of values hierarchy our gifted students were quite similar to their peers, except for creativity - the difference in its ranks between the groups of gifted and normal students is the greatest one we observed. What does that mean?

In a society like ours where creativity and achievements are emphasized, this phenomenon might reflect a kind of psychological defence on the part of those who perceive themselves as non-achievers. The average school population decreases the value of creative performance in order to avoid negative psychological experiences that the fact of its non-involvement in creative activities might cause. On the other side, it might be that just because of this

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CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE TIMES OF CHANGES

(After the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child)

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"Today's children are the citizens of tomorrow's world, their survival, protection and development are the pre-requisites for the future development of humanity... Empowerment of the younger generation with knowledge and resources to meet their basic human rights and to grow to their full potential should be a primary goal of national development."

(*World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children*, 1990)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in November 1989, has so far been ratified by all the UN Member Countries in the Central and Eastern European sub-region. It could be therefore assumed that in keeping with the goals of the Convention, whose adoption by the international community represented a successful completion of many years of discussions, these countries will provide for special protection of children wherever the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and follow-up international pacts cannot pay heed to all their specific needs and provide them with further safeguards and care including adequate legal protection.

The States which ratified or signed the Convention thus demonstrated enough good will and readiness to *"respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social*