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MOTIVATING THE GIFTED AT SCHOOL – A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF GIFTED STUDENT'S PAST EXPERIENCES

Abstract: The research into academic motivation dynamics of gifted students is so far inconclusive, even though some certain research studies have pointed to some definite idiosyncrasies with relative precision. These idiosyncrasies result from diagnosticized giftedness and contribute largely to the learning outcomes. Among these, cognitive abilities (convergent and divergent thinking, perception, remembering, imagination, humour) stand out next to other gifted students' personal characteristics in social, emotional and motivational areas, which should be taken into consideration in planning and implementing (individualised) learning activities during the instruction process. These learning activities are especially emphasized in the socio-cultural theoretical approach which is based on a hypothesis that the quality teaching, directed into achieving an optimal match between the selected learning activities, subject matters and student's individual characteristics, is a prerequisite for an effective learning. Gifted students are mainly a heterogeneous group according to their personal features and are very differently motivated for participating in school instruction. The more precisely the teachers know and recognize their motivational patterns the more precisely they are able to plan learning activities (subject matter, methods) which make the gifted motivated for learning in the most appropriate way.

In the paper the results of a retrospective analysis are presented, in which 18 identified gifted students were assessed on how their primary school teachers were motivating them for school work. The analysis confirmed what other empirical studies have already revealed, i.e. the most common characteristic in the motivational field of the gifted pupils (e.g., meaningful leaning, authentic learning tasks, and the power of teacher's feedback information). Students' suggestions on how to stimulate motivation of the gifted at school are also useful for the school practice as far as it's obvious that the main goal of fostering motivation at school is not just to achieve best (temporary) learning outcomes but also to stimulate intrinsic motivational orientation towards learning and establishing a value of a life-long learning.

Key words: gifted pupils, gifted education, motivating the gifted, academic motivation, socio-cultural approach.

Introduction

"I am neither especially clever nor especially gifted.
I am only very, very curious."
(Albert Einstein)

For the purposes of the paper, we understand the academic motivation (i.e., motivation to learn) as a mediatory variable of academic success. Motivated students begin to learn, are learning (e.g., they are asking questions, experimenting, reading, thinking …), and persist to learn until they complete their learning tasks, find the solution, or achieve the preset learning goals (Juriševič, 2006). In other words motivation is the key factor of the learning process and is more than to learning achievement connected to cognitive and metacognitive processes which are partaking in the learning process (Juriševič, 2006; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Wentzel & Wigfeld, 2009). Rheinberg, Vollmeyer, & Rollett (2000) explain that the effects of motivation on learning are manifest in three levels: 1) the level of the time a student devotes to learning or learning tasks, both in the sense of range (duration) as in the sense of the frequency with which learning activities are performed; 2) the level of the forms or the nature of learning activities, with regard to the regulation of the effort a student invests into learning (proportionally to the difficulty level of a learning task) on one hand, and the application of learning strategies which will motivate students and enable them to achieve their learning goals efficiently (learning with understanding or surface learning) and 3) the level of the student's functional frame of mind, which pertains to the optimal psychological state of a student during learning (focus or abstractedness; emotions).

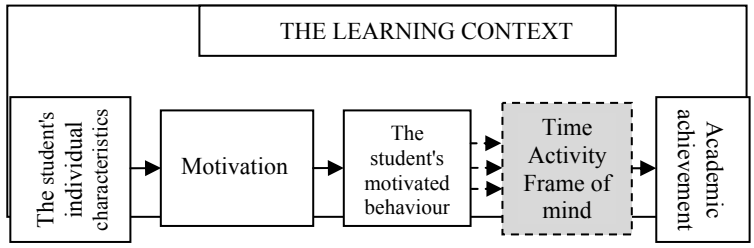

Figure 1. The Dynamics of Motivation in the Process of Learning (see Rheinberg et al., 2000)

Research shows that the variables of the students' abilities are the strongest predictors of academic success (Gagne & St. Père, 2002; Gottfredson, 2002; Laidra, Pullmann, & Allik, 2007), of course if the student is also sufficiently motivated for learning (Spinath, Freudenthaler, & Neubauer, 2010). This discourse is particularly interesting in the case of gifted students with highly developed learning abilities, for it opens up the question about the efficiency of the school at encouraging the development and the realization of the given learning potential possessed by gifted students, and the efficiency of the school in preventing gifted students from failing in their learning efforts (Montgomery, 2009; Rimm, 2008).

Intrinsic Motivation and the Academic Development of a Gifted Student

Although numerous researchers have attempted to conceptualize giftedness throughout history, the concept remains void of a unified definition, while the main perspective of all of the endeavors remains the same: to recognize, nurture and encourage giftedness. This is the case in contemporary models as well (e.g., Gagné, Feldhusen, Feldman, Mönks, Tannenbaum; as cited in Kaufman in Sternberg, 2008), where giftedness is defined as a set of intrinsic (psychological) and extrinsic (contextual) variables, which interactively lead towards the development of gifted behavior. Giftedness is not perceived in a strictly psychometrical sense (measured as intelligence) anymore; moreover, diverse environmental factors are also emphasized in addition to genetic factors in the case of its occurrence or manifestation (Freeman, Raffan, & Warwick, 2010). The motivation for learning, which encourages students to strive for excellence or success respectively in a given - context, is one of the environmental factors playing a prominent role. Terman's longitudinal study on gifted children from the first half of the 20th Century represents the pioneer empirical proof of this premise (Gagné in St. Père, 2002). After a four-decade long study on gifted individuals from their mid-childhood on, the results had shown that, in addition to intellectual capabilities, motivation or those particular of its contents respectively (e.g., perseverance, aptly determined goals in life, the belief in personal abilities and capabilities, independence from the senses of inferiority) are of crucial importance for success in life that originate from the individuals themselves, lead each individual towards a chosen activity, and then encourage and monitor them

along the way until they finally achieve their goal or have ultimately satisfied their particular needs. These factors are collectively known as "intrinsic motivation" or "intrinsic motivational orientation". Intrinsic motivation is it namely which prompts curiousness and the aspiration towards the search for meaning, thus enriching the individual's inner, cognitive world (Harter, 1981; Oldfather & McLaughlin, 1993) and encouraging them towards searching for something knew, towards confronting challenges, towards testing their personal performance limits, and towards learning. Ryan and Deci understand it as "[…] this natural inclination toward assimilation, mastery, spontaneous interest, and exploration deemed essential to cognitive and social development and the principal source of enjoyment and vitality throughout life, including adolescence." (Ryan & Deci, 2000a, p. 70) Intrinsic motivation can be even more concretely understood in the sense of mental activity during assorted activities while experiencing satisfaction in them at the same time, for we are doing something because we find it interesting, because we enjoy doing it, and because it is of distinct personal importance or value for us, regardless of the world around us (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998; Ryan & Deci, 2000b). In this way we satisfy our psychological needs, realize and develop potentials, and build a healthy self-concept. Csikszentmihalyi describes a special peak experience of intrinsic motivation as a state of "flow", which as he puts it "[…] is a subjective state that people report when they are completely involved in something to the point of forgetting time, fatigue, and everything else but the activity itself." (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1989, p. 14). The state of flow is a state we can identify in the lives of creative individuals, such as scientists or artists, but we can certainly also quite quickly sense it by observing children during spontaneous play; although empirical research on this particular phenomenon involving children and adolescents has been rather scarce up to this point in time. Gottfried (1996) for example, has in her longitudinal research involving younger students, found a small yet statistically significant linear relation between intrinsic motivation and intellectual ability ($r = .22$); the intellectual ability in seven, and later on in eight-year olds, was also positively connected with the intrinsic motivation of those particular students when they had reached the age of nine (from $r = .27$ to $r = .39$), and when they had progressed in age as well. Vallerand, Gagné, Senécal, & Pelletier (1994), and Miserandino (1996) have also contributed similar

research findings: gifted students are more intrinsically motivated for school work than their non-gifted classmates.

Heterogeneity of the Motivational Structure in Gifted Students

Rea (2000, 2009) explains that all gifted students are not motivated towards learning in the same way, that a lack of intrinsic motivation may seriously jeopardize the development of their potential, and that this could even lead to failure in learning. Some of the gifted students namely remain relatively uninterested in school and school activities, or remain engaged only in the activities they personally regard as important. Another group of gifted students for example are experiencing various learning difficulties and other problems. Even others suffer from such a level of failure anxiety that they purposely avoid studying, develop perfectionist expectations towards their own learning approach, and/or form a negative self-image that consequently discourages them from studying and learning (Reis & Renzulli, 2009). This premise was first empirically proven by Drews (1964), when she identified three different groups of high school students based on their motivational characteristics: the Creative Intellectuals (20%), the Studious (60%), and the so-called Social Leaders (20%). The results had shown that only the students allocated to the first of the groups or types of achievers respectively were intrinsically motivated for learning, while the students allocated to the remaining groups were predominantly extrinsically or socially motivated. Quoting Elizabeth Drews: "Thus, in comparison with the other groups, the creative intellectuals showed the strongest motivation towards learning. They were more interested in aesthetic matters, more autonomous in their thinking, more willing to be original and solve problems. They also were more independent and rebellious, more liberal, more optimistic, more accepting of uncertainty and ambiguity, and preferred solitude more than the studious or social leaders." (Drews, 1964, p. xxxviii). At this point, we should also mention a more prominent study by Betts and Neihart (1988), in which the researchers have devised a matrix of six profiles of gifted students, and furthermore assessed that only gifted students pertaining to the group known as the Autonomous Learners are intrinsically motivated for learning, while the other types or profiles of gifted students show deficiencies concerning the motivational aspect, especially in connection with a negative self-image in the

learning field. Juriševič too (2006) has only been able to prove a homogenous motivational pattern in younger outstandingly gifted students. The pattern in question shows a preponderance of intrinsic motivational orientation, while a study of outstandingly gifted fourteen-year olds has revealed such a dispersed array of motivational structures that made it impossible for her to isolate a characteristic or group-specific intrinsic motivational orientation. The researcher has consolidated the results with the findings from some other studies (Gagné & St. Père, 2002), which in addition to explaining the decrease in intrinsic motivation for learning in school during the transition from childhood to adolescence by considering the notion of developmental differentiation; also explain the decrease in intrinsic motivation for learning during the transitional period in question based on the premise that the level of giftedness in certain students tends to become less consistent with the offer and the demands of the curriculum during the course of education, what leads to the students becoming bored. The interests of students, especially the gifted, namely tend to become more and more stratified during the growing-up period, and thus all the more different from what the school as an educational institution demands and has to offer. The school as an educational institution can therefore often not supply the gifted with an offer that could turn out to be to their satisfaction. Experience shows that school does not accept, respect, nor appreciate the ideas of the gifted to the extent that would encourage them to preserve personal fields of interest or to feel motivated to develop personal fields of interest, and thus sustain a constructive relationship with the educational community (Juriševič & Kralj, 2003). In regard to the aforementioned, experts also advert to the link between the motivation to learn and possible psychosocial issues in children and adolescents (Strniša, 2003; Tomori & Zalar, 1998), an aspect that would definitely prove of value in attempting to understand the motivational characteristics in gifted students. Nowadays society namely offers (gifted) students a lot in the sense of possibilities and opportunities to participate and to become individuals, while at the same time expecting "a lot" and above all a lot "to soon" from them in the sense of emotional mastery, socially responsible behavior, and the formed system of values, while offering them extrinsic motivation and extrinsic awards to make it more interesting for them to achieve their goals. By this means, certain gifted students manage to assimilate to the workings of the educational system or to identify the requirements of the socio-cultural environment

respectively quicker than their non-gifted peers. This enables such gifted to strategically adapt to the socio-cultural norms of the educational process, gradually transforming the main motivations to learn into extrinsic motivational incentives exclusively (e.g., awards, good grades, social acceptance, prestige, the avoidance of failure), which in turn cannot satisfy the developmental needs. Therefore, they neither contribute to the personal development of gifted students (e.g., developing personal interests, values, self-concept) nor do they play a role in assuring quality knowledge. Students motivated in such a manner only learn for instrumental or pragmatic reasons - in order to finish learning as soon as possible (Juriševič, 2006). Clearer than during childhood, the latter can manifest itself during adolescence, when students begin to emancipate personality wise and to determine on their own if they partake in certain activities on their own accord or for example on the initiative of the parents; or even because they feel pressured to do so by the social environment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998; Tomori & Zalar, 1998; Ule, 2000). Therefore, it is of crucial importance to nurture and encourage gifted students to search for intrinsic motives, especially in the latter period of childhood and on the verge to early adulthood; for this points in life represent phases of radical motivational change in the sense of social demands and the multiplication of different roles, regardless where the motivation to take on those roles sources from (Ryan & Deci, 2000b, 2009).

How could the gifted then be motivated towards the intrinsic motivational orientation to learn in school? One of the possible ways that could lead to the answer to this particular question is to study the nature of the answers posed by gifted students themselves to this particular question, and to take these answers into account when teaching; if teachers do not learn to know the motivational structure of their (gifted) students well enough, they will consequently not be able to teach efficiently. Juriševič and Kralj (2007) have, for example, found that gifted high school and college students are best motivated towards learning in their respective educational institutions by a relaxed and democratic atmosphere, by the presence of humor, by being able to actively participate in the learning, by interesting subject matter, or by concrete problems that represent a creative thinking challenge to students, as well as teachers (mentors) who accept the students' ideas, maintain a relation with the students based on mutual respect and co-operation, and supply the students with useful formative and summative feedback. Pangerčič (2006) conducted an interesting study as well,

in which she reached similar conclusions; gifted students are best motivated in elementary school by the following motivational factors: the presence of humor during classes, written and oral praise; research, field, and experimental work, studying form the notebook, authentic learning tasks, and various brain-teasing tasks composed by the teacher. The findings of both studies show that, in school, gifted students are inclined towards satisfying their needs for competence, independence, and relatedness (Juriševič, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000a, 2000b, 2009; Whitney & Hirsch, 2007).
Two research questions have been posed in the empirical part of the study: 1) What was the best motivational factor in learning for gifted students, who are still successful at learning today, during their elementary education period? 2) Based on their learning experiences, what would gifted students suggest teachers should improve in order to become more efficient in motivating gifted students towards learning in school?

Method

The main research method applied was retrospective analysis. In addition, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research has been applied as well.

Participants

The study included 18 gifted students, who were chosen as participants at the Summer Research Camp for Recipients of the Zois Scholarship for Gifted/Talented Students, organized by the Employment Service of Slovenia in July of 2009. All of the students (6 male, 12 female) had been identified as gifted based on the results of their aptitude tests, their college grades, and their sterling achievement based on the concept titled *Scouting and Working with Talented and Gifted High School Students* (2007). Four of the participants were 1st year students, four were 2nd year students, five were 3rd year students, two were 4th year students, three were students who have completed their studies but have not graduated yet, and one (female) student who managed to graduate during that particular school year. The participating students were enrolled at the following faculties of different Slovene universities: the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, the Faculty of Environmental

Sciences, the Biotechnical Faculty, the Faculty of Civil and Geodetic Engineering, the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering, the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, and the Faculty of Business Administration.

Instrument

A short questionnaire was devised for the purposes of the study, containing four multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question. The respondents were asked to rate the answers to the following questions: 1) What kinds of teachers did you like best in elementary school?, 2) What kinds of elementary school classes have motivated you towards learning the most?, 3) What kinds of tasks have you liked best in school?, and 4) When have you participated in class most actively?. The fifth question encouraged the respondents to pose three concrete suggestions about what should be changed in elementary school based on their own opinion, in order for school lessons to become better suited for gifted students.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data were collected based on e-surveying. The data analysis encompassed quantitative (descriptive) and qualitative (content) analysis.

Results

The purpose of the study was to highlight the optimum conditions under which gifted students can learn in school through retrospective analysis, based on how gifted students used to perceive or how they respectively still perceive the optimum conditions for learning in school. Supported by a vast learning history of gifted students and relevant time frames, a retrospective analysis ought to enable us to understand the learning needs of gifted students during the earliest period of their learning development more precisely.

The analysis has shown that gifted students remember their favorite elementary school teachers based on their personality traits, or rather based on the relation that the teachers were able to establish with the students (respect, humor); and also based on assessing the expert competence of each of the teachers (Table 1).

Table 1. Favorite Teachers according to Gifted Students.

Favorite teachers:	Mo	M	s
Teachers, who have accepted me the way I am.	3	2. 78	.43
Teachers, who have demanded order and discipline in class.	3	2. 50	.62
Teachers, who had listened to me.	3	2. 89	. 32
Teachers, who had praised me.	3	2. 67	. 48
Teachers, who were patient.	3	2. 67	. 48
Teachers, who had demanded an answer at once.	2	1. 72	. 57
Teachers, who had a sense of humor.	3	2. 83	. 38
Teachers, who had encouraged me to think.	3	2. 78	. 43
Teachers, who had posed difficult question.	2	2. 23	. 83
Teachers, who had mastered their subject perfectly.	3	2. 94	. 24

Mo = Mode; M = Mean; s = Standard Deviation.

While in elementary school, gifted students had been best motivated to learn through classes and lessons which exposed them to cognitive challenges (i.e., solving problems, experimenting). In addition to that, the results in Table 2 also reveal a trend towards the extrinsic motivational orientation to learn - to learn from the notebook. The most likely reason for this path probably is that it is a fast path leading to good grades and a positive self-concept of a successful learner directly and without big surprises.

Table 2. Classes, Most Motivating for Gifted Students.

The most motivating classes:	Mo	M	s
When the lesson was built around a problem which we had to solve.	4	3. 93	. 80
I found it most interesting when classes were conducted as field work.	4	3. 50	1. 34
I had the most fun when I could do research work or focus on a research project.	2	2. 67	1. 20
I found it most appealing when I could learn with the help of experiments.	5	4	1. 17
My favorite way of studying was to study from a course book, an encyclopedia, and books.	4	3. 17	1. 15
My favorite way of studying was with the help of computer.	2	2. 06	. 87
My favorite way of studying was to study from notebooks.	4	3. 94	1. 21

Mo = Mode; M = Mean; s = Standard Deviation.

Among the learning tasks, which the gifted students found most motivating while in elementary school, the respondents rated such kinds of tasks the highest on average that had represented a

cognitive challenge to them. Such tasks were for example differentiated tasks appropriate for their ability level, more difficult tasks from the course book, and authentic learning tasks (Table 3). They have also similarly assessed the highest level of personal learning activity; this was the case in cognitively suitable tasks and activities, including humor (humor as a cognitive challenge and a tension breaker) and the need for individual work or the need for one's individual needs to be respected (Table 4).

The qualitative analysis of the suggestions about what should be changed in school, in order for classes to become more motivating for gifted students, has shown that the suggestions made by the gifted students themselves could be allocated to two broader categories in the sense of content; namely to the category of general suggestions (16%) and the category of specific suggestions (84%). Among the general suggestions, the respondents had emphasized the importance of a socially inclusive and motivating classroom climate, beneficial for learning in school. By opinion of the respondents this climate is based on respecting differences, a personal student-teacher relation, discipline, the teacher's authority, diligence, independence, and an appropriate level of difficulty. Among the specific suggestions, the students have most frequently suggested different types of didactical/methodical and content-based individualizations and differentiations, including psychological incentives and concrete suggestions for adaptations tailored to gifted students, such as:

- Additional and improving activities: preparations for various competitions, additional classes, additional tasks during lessons, field trips, "theme" afternoons (31%);
- Differentiated study work and tasks posing a cognitive challenge to students: more demanding and/or different tasks, level teaching, creative tasks, interdisciplinary life-based projects (27%);
- An individualized approach and motivation: motivating the students according to their individual characteristics, encouraging creativity and innovativeness, additional encouraging of gifted students with learning difficulties (22%);
- Learning methods and forms of course work: experimental, research and project-oriented work, individual and group work (13%);
- Praise, awards, benefits: for results achieved at school and beyond; educational magazines and other publications for students at a reduced price (7%).

Table 3. Learning Tasks, Most Motivating for Gifted Students.

The most motivating learning tasks:	Mo	M	s
Tasks devised by the teacher (on the blackboard or on a work sheet).	4	4. 00	. 84
Tasks from the course book.	4	3. 23	1. 02
More challenging tasks from the course book (marked with an asterisk).	4	3. 61	1. 09
Unknown tasks, which had made me think even harder.	2	3. 44	1. 34
Tasks I had devised on my own.	2	2. 06	. 87
Tasks, which were applicable in real life as well.	4	3. 72	1. 23

Mo = Mode; M = Mean; s = Standard Deviation.

Table 4. The Highest Level of Activity of Gifted Students during Lessons.

The highest level of activity during lessons:	Mo	M	s
When I was able to make suggestions, initiatives, share ideas …	2	3. 28	1. 53
When the teacher encouraged me to make suggestions, share ideas …	4	2. 83	1. 04
When I was solving difficult tasks; when I had to think a lot.	5	3. 89	1. 28
When lessons were fun.	5	4. 22	1.00
When I could work with others and was the leader of the work group.	4	3. 29	. 92
When I could work with others but was not the leader of the work group.	2	3. 00	. 97
When I was able to work on my own and nobody else had bothered me.	2	3. 50	1. 30
When the teacher praised me publicly.	4	3. 44	1. 10
When the teacher had praised me by writing a remark into my notebook.	4	3. 44	1. 38
When I was solving more difficult tasks than my classmates.	2	3. 39	1. 20

Mo = Mode; M = Arithmetic Mean; s = Standard Deviation.

Discussion and Conclusion

"The method of teaching should only be regularly upgraded, not turned upside down."
(4th year student from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science)

The motivation to learn is a key factor of learning process dynamics. Outstanding intellectual and other predispositions of gifted students cannot be realized, nor will they lead to learning

without (intrinsic or extrinsic) motivation. The results of the empirical retrospective analysis lead to the conclusion that gifted students are being motivated towards learning in school through relations, individualized content, and learning methods that satisfy their needs for competence, independence and social integration (see Ryan & Deci, 2000a, 2009), or which gifted students regard as sufficiently meaningful and important respectively (i.e., in the sense of maintaining a level of emotional and cognitive tension, representing a cognitive challenge, encouraging curiosity, considering interests, and assisting the students in building a positive self-concept) in order to follow their intrinsic motivational orientation.

The professional competence of teachers for motivating gifted students in school demands additional expert knowledge, with which the teachers are firstly capable of recognizing the individual motivational characteristics of gifted students, and secondly of monitoring, reinforcing, and newly establishing or amplifying those characteristics when the students are first introduced to a particular field of learning (Juriševič, 2009). According to Mann (2009, p. 882), "[…] there is namely not just one single correct approach to teaching gifted students". The teacher should rather be trained to become able to efficiently motivate gifted students through different motivational structures. As the addressed studies show, only a few of the gifted students are intrinsically motivated for learning in school, while others are aspiring to achieve better grades or various forms of social praise to a greater extent. Even others are driven to learn by their fear of failure, and there are also gifted students who remain completely unmotivated for learning, which leads to them abandoning learning quite early in life to pursue other fields of interest; some even unconstructive in nature (Kroflič, 2001). Although the majority of the studies justifiably shows that it is necessary to systemically encourage intrinsic motivational orientation in gifted students, it should be noted at this juncture that this should lead to complete abandonment of the extrinsic motivational incentives (e.g., praise, awards, grades, benefits), which are often of crucial importance in school in order for the gifted to learn; a fact that has been proven in this and other studies (Juriševič & Kralj, 2007; Pangerčič, 2006). Good and Brophy (2000) for example list a number of limitations when applying intrinsic motivational incentives exclusively. They particularly emphasize the situational restrictedness – the restrictedness of the applicability of intrinsic motivational

incentives during lessons. Furthermore, they are of the opinion that teachers should abide to the curriculum as a whole and not focus solely on what interests the students (intrinsically). They are also of the opinion that different strategies for student motivation should be integrated because if the opposite would be the case, Good and Brophy reason that "[…] although the students will find enjoyment in school activities, they will not learn anything at all in the process" (Good & Brophy, 2000, p. 243). Whitney and Hirsch (2007) call to attention as well that extrinsic motivational incentives are beneficial in particular cases, such as when learning how to manage a certain routine, or when acquainting (gifted) students with new learning content for which they have not yet developed any special preferences, since extrinsic motivational incentives tend to steer students towards becoming interested in new content (e.g., Brophy, 1999). In their study, Niu and Liu (2009) have researched how instructions that differ in content affect the creativity of the students in the sense of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational incentives. They found that gifted students, who had been given more structured and exact instructions for work, had demonstrated a much more creative approach in solving the tasks in comparison to the students, who had been given general and less structured instructions. Gifted students namely need stable support and clear directions to learn learning, especially during the first years of education, in order to become independent, efficient, and successful students along the way (see Whitney & Hirsch, 2007).

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Motiviranje nadarjenih v šoli: retrospektivna analiza izkušenj nadarjenih študentov

Povzetek: Na vprašanje o dinamiki učne uspešnosti nadarjenih učencev do danes še nismo pridobili enoznačnega odgovora, čeprav so raziskave relativno natančno nakazale določene posebnosti, ki izhajajo iz diagnosticirane nadarjenosti in pomembno prispevajo k učnim rezultatom. Med njimi tako izstopajo kognitivne sposobnosti (konvergentno in divergentno mišljenje, zaznavanje, pomnjenje, domišljija, humor) ter še nekatere druge osebnostne lastnosti nadarjenih učencev na socialnem, čustvenem in motivacijskem področju, ki jih je potrebno upoštevati pri načrtovanju oziroma izvajanju (individualiziranih) učnih dejavnosti med poukom. Te so še posebno poudarjene v socio-kulturnem teoretskem pristopu, ki temelji na predpostavki, da je za učinkovito učenje potrebno kakovostno poučevanje, ki je usmerjeno k doseganju optimalnega ujemanja med izbranimi učnimi dejavnostmi ter vsebinami in učenčevimi individualnimi značilnostmi. Nadarjeni učenci so namreč heterogena skupina učencev po vrsti osebnostnih lastnosti in so tudi zelo različno motivirani za sodelovanje pri pouku v šoli. Natančneje kot učitelji poznajo in prepoznavajo njihove motivacijske vzorce in posebnosti, ustrezneje lahko načrtujejo učne dejavnosti (vsebine, metode), ki so zanje motivirajoče in prispevajo k realizaciji njihovih potencialov.

V prispevku je so predstavljeni rezultati retrospektivne študije, v kateri je 18 identificiranih nadarjenih študentov ocenilo motivacijske spodbude, s katerimi so jih učitelji motivirali v osnovni šoli. Analiza je potrdila določene posebnosti učne motivacije, ki jih tudi na osnovi drugih empiričnih študij razumemo kot značilnejše za nadarjene učence (npr. smiselno učenje, avtentične naloge, pomen učiteljevih povratnih informacij). Koristni za pedagoško prakso so predlogi, ki so jih nadarjeni študenti na osnovi lastnih učnih izkušenj podali za spodbujanje nadarjenih učencev v šolskem kontekstu. Cilj motiviranja nadarjenih učencev namreč ni le v doseganju čimboljših (trenutnih) učnih rezultatov, ampak spodbujanje razvoja notranje motivacijske naravnanosti ter oblikovanje vrednote vseživljenjskega učenja.

Ključne besede: nadarjeni učenci, poučevanje nadarjenih, motiviranje nadarjenih, učna motivacija, socio-kulturni pristop.