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### **The 25th Round Table on Giftedness in Vršac, Serbia**

The previous news from Serbia were concerned with a good example of educational practice with the gifted in several domains (Bogunović, 2017). This time the news will refer to a scientific conference, the 25th International Round Table on Giftedness (RTG) in Vršac (28th of June, 2019), its headlines and outlines of conclusions or, we may say, incentives for further discussion on the delicate theme regarding the mesh network of the needs of the highly able and the needs of society.

#### **Short timeline overview**

The RTG started some 25 years ago (in 1995) after the initiative of a group of enthusiasts - professors from the Preschool Teacher Training College "Mihailo Pavlov" (PTTC) in Vršac<sup>1</sup>, and while lasting this long, it became an important place for scholars and practitioners from the region of the Western Balkans who had a chance to meet each other, but also international participants and keynote speakers. Co-organizers were, e.g. universities and associations from Romania, Slovenia, Macedonia, England, Hungary and the Serbian poets' society. The manifestation owes its continued existence to the vision, ideas, knowledge and firm persistence of its main originator and organizer Prof. Dr. Grozdanka Gojkov. For many years, it was the only conference on giftedness in Serbia.

The core idea of the RTG is to join together scientific, educational and practical endeavors in different domains of giftedness with the goal of reinforcing research orientation in approaching diverse issues in gifted and talented development and education, to support new and advanced educational practices in working with gifted children and youngsters, which will in turn be applied in their own curricula at PTTC. The next goal was to build up the network among researchers from the region and the wider scientific community, which succeeded to a great extent and now RTG represents the nest for an exchange and the emergence of new ideas and practices. Up to now, RTG have had over 1500 participants, more than 1000 presentations and almost 30 thematic monographs that followed each RTG, with a strong significance and influence in the states of the former Yugoslavia. The RTG was growing and developing along with the world's latest knowledge and initiatives.

Thanks to these activities, PTTC is now certified as a *European Talent Point*, as a part of *European Talent Support Network*. Also, the PTTC was a participant in the European comparative study on the early identification of giftedness, organized by Huerta del Rey (Spain) Research Centre for the Gifted. More practice related projects were: *Gifted children and relevant adults in the region of south Banat and Timish and Education of preschool teachers and teachers for the identification and work with gifted children*.

#### **Round Table on Giftedness (RTG) policy**

One of the basic ideas of the RTG is that gifted and creative individuals cannot find their way on their own in order to fulfil their potentials, unless they get support from the closer and/or wider environment. So, it was expected that scientific and professional knowledge condensed at and around RTG will have a chance to raise awareness and influence defining beneficial social policies for the gifted. Therefore, the special attention, through a conference's main topics, was given to an investigation of factors that could give

an incentive and support for the development of giftedness and creativity, with respect for cultural diversity. Themes of the conferences were changing from early identification and development of giftedness; from preschool to student population with a special emphasis on the place of the gifted in society; factors that influence development; social and family support for the gifted; placement of the gifted in society when they grow up, as well as methodological problems of researching giftedness.

The important inference as a result of numerous research results and discussions in the course of the years is that a small number of gifted individuals managed to overcome all the obstacles that they faced and personal developmental crises, if not being supported by an "environmental optimum". The inborn excellent potentials, as well as the intensive and persistent training and education pursued by gifted individuals, are not enough.

### **Round Table on Giftedness (RTG) 2019**

Hence, this year, the special edition of the Round Table on Giftedness had a challenging theme - ***Complexity of giftedness and creativity phenomena*** - Challenges: The individual and society. The keynote speakers were Prof. Dr Roland Persson from Jönköping University, Sweden (*Challenges of the basis of giftedness and talent education*) and Dr. Zora Krnjaić from the Institute of Psychology, University of Belgrade (*Hobby potential for positive youth development and wellbeing*).

In her opening address Prof. Dr. Gojkov presented her reflections, focusing on world trends in the treatment of giftedness and creativity from the angle of relations between the individual and society<sup>2</sup>. She expressed the opinion that gifted individuals on their way to self-realization, carried by their destiny in vast idiographic diversity while trying to reach superior performances, have a feeling of vagueness and uncertainty. Namely, nowadays, giftedness and creativity development are part of the function of economic prosperity, and the role of the gifted is to support the national and/or global economy. Another question was raised: to what extent does society, as well as economy, relying on the profit of ideology, take into consideration the needs and interests of individuals, in this case gifted individuals? What are their interests, and how do the relations between economy and society go along towards the encouragement of creativity and giftedness, which should be a benefit for both an individual and society? In addition to the discussion, Prof. Persson pointed out that the general ambition of the world economy to make every effort to harness talent worldwide for economic growth is an impossible one with little or no support in objective empirical research<sup>3</sup>.

The participants of the RTG tried to find the "reconciliation" and "balancing" approach between the demands of society and economy in relation to the complex nature of giftedness and creativity. Also, the question was raised whether education achieves to fulfil the wide range of needs that talented youngsters have, and does it equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for integration in professional and life streams. It seems that the creativity of the gifted is constantly challenged by the necessity to integrate their gifts into a realistic setting. At that point, the issue between the relation "gifted individual – society" is burdened with another problem and that is, the domain of giftedness. Namely, some talents are more economically interesting than others, so the question is then – are they less worthy? The RTG 2019 opened questions that ask for complex answers.

In the conclusion remarks of the conference it was pointed out that the issue of giftedness and creativity is for now still an "arena" for all scientific fields, in which all those induced by the phenomenon search for new approaches, in order to get closer to the answers to old questions and open new ones, thus meeting their needs for exploration and serving the gifted, being honorable in a social context.

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#### REFERENCES

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2 <http://www.nauka.uskolavrsac.in.rs/25-okrugli-sto/>

3 [http://www.nauka.uskolavrsac.in.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Keynote\\_Persson\\_EN.pdf](http://www.nauka.uskolavrsac.in.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Keynote_Persson_EN.pdf)