# Positive attitudes toward children with disabilities and gifted children

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## ABSTRACT

This article investigates the processes that successful positive attitudes toward children with disabilities and gifted children.

**KEY WORDS**: positive attitudes, positive stigma, people with disabilities, positive psychology, talents.

## INTRUDUCTION

**Talent is eminently development capabilities**. Talent is a combination of elements give people the opportunity successfully, independently and creatively perform some complex work. As far as talent is a complex state of psychic qualities of the individual, so he can not be be defined as a single ability. But the absence or, more accurately, weak development of even one important skill can be successfully compensated with intensive development of other abilities entering the complex set of qualities talent. The structure of the talent is determined by the nature of needs (requirements) that bring personality to an activity.

**Talent identification (TI) is big challenge**. From sports, through art, to education, researchers in all domains are attempting to find a way to identify the best in their field. However, finding the most effective, and most efficient TI method is a complex task, which despite its apparently recent 'rise' to prominence, has been a concern for quite a while. In the late 1960s and early 1970s many East European countries realized the weakness of the traditional TI programmes, and attempted to develop

methods of identification which could be underpinned with scientific theory and evidence (Bompa, 1999). The results were (apparently) astounding; for example, eighty percent of Bulgarian medallists in the 1976 Olympic Games were the result of a thorough TI process. Similar results were demonstrated by Romanian and East German athletes in the 1972, 1976 and 1980 Olympics; successes again believed to be due to their scientific selection processes adopted in the late 1960s. In other domains, such as dance, art, and education it also has become apparent that potential talent often is overlooked due to poor methods of identification. (Wolstencroft, 2002).

Identification of children with disabilities as talented children is even more complex. Usually children with special educational needs are stigmatized.

To be stigmatized means to bear a negative moral scar on yourself, which as a result of prejudice makes you different from the majority. Stigma separates people into groups, which we in general can call "we" and "they". People under stigma are defined as outsiders, distant from the usual social life of the majority. Stigmatizing usually creates prejudiced hostility in the stigmatized people towards the society and vice versa. Stigmatizing is not an episodic process of the social life of society, but stigmatizing is a lasting social problem which concerns the moral and culture of the people who live in that society.

Every stigma, even the least manifested one can impact the realization of the life plan of a person. Once he/she has felt different and socially declined, the individual starts to develop protection strategies, and this lessens his energy for constructing and following life plans for social realization, typical for the dominating values and standards for a given culture. However, stigma may have also the opposite effect – to motivate people with social needs to be successfully integrated and realized in the social life and employment processes. However, in the contemporary global society we observe a tendency of strengthening of the resistance of disabled people. Furthermore, the good examples of successful, socially and

professionally realized stigmatized people, as well as the studies in this field, show that the positive stigma impacts as well the disabled people (Linville, 1987). Positive stigma stimulates the people with special needs to seek more contacts, to become more independent and to realize themselves adequately in the social life.

According to Baum, (1990), Brody & Mills, (1997) double-exclusive pupils double unrecognized exclusivity can be found in one of three groups:

- First group - students who have been identified as gifted, but are defined as poor students because of poor self-fulfillment, lack of motivation or laziness. Have subtle learning difficulties.
- Second group - students who have been identified as having learning disabilities, but whose exceptional abilities have never been recognized. Inadequate assessments and / or low IQ results often lead to underestimation of their intellectualabilities. If exceptional abilities of students go unrecognized strengths are never the focus of their curriculum. These students were seen for what they can do, not the talent that they first show.
- Third group - students, which have been granted resources or social services for learning difficulties or are paid attention and time to work with gifted students. Often can be identified as having medium abilities because their abilities and disabilities mask each other. Presented well but below their potential.

Not all students with gifts and talents are the same. Each student is unique. But uniqueness can also obey certain typology. Betts G.T. & Neihart M. (1988) defines six types of talented students:

- Type 1 – successful

- Type 2 - challenging swing gifts

- Type 3 - underground

- Type 4 - dropped

- Type 5 - double talented.

- Type 6 - independent learners.

Using these profiles of talented students is appropriate interpretation of behaviors of students in the school system and to identify, assess and diagnose gifts and talents. Identification of positive aspects of the gift or talent amid social and / or school unacceptable behavior is an art that every teacher and parent can and should master (Levterova, 2015)


**The Impact of  attitudes toward children whit  disabilities and gifted children**


Every person owns a feature, which identifies him to a certain group, and in real life people have many identities (Linville, 1987). Stigmatized people can also assign themselves to another group in order to protect themselves from the stigma. Most of the studies on stigma are focused on studying the identity which stigmatizes a certain individual, but every person owns a multiple of identities – religious, racial, social, etc.

For example, Reyhan, a pop artist may be identified by multiple of features – ethnic origin, gender, religion, profession.  Therefore, every person, as far as he has many identities, he can identify himself with each one of them and to determine his own status with this identity with which he feels himself most appreciated. Apart from this, the multiple identities

are the basis of psychological well-being. People with more complex identities are more resistant to diseases related to stress and depression (Hong and Seltzer, 1995), by identifying themselves with different groups they can receive a wider social support (Thoits, 1986) and to feel more satisfied with what they have achieved in their life (Crocker and Quinn. 2000).

The total identity assessment of the personality is an aggregate process, which combines all identities of a person with the purpose of protecting his psychological well-being.

Stigmatizing is a social construction and certain identities can be stigmatized in one context, but in another this cannot be done. Strategically one identity can be underlined with which they are appreciated, while they can cross out an identity with which they are not appreciated in a certain social context .

Stigmatized people can accent certain affiliation and to cross out another, which stigmatizes them and leads to psychological failure. Despite from this, people spontaneously change the way of their self-esteem and affiliation in different situations. The studies of identity adaptability have found out that people orientate themselves positively to identities which are adaptable in a given situation. For example, the American men of Asian origin according to the stereotype are better in studying mathematics, while the stereotype of the American women of Asian origin, is for better achievements in the humanitarian science fields. In a situation of doing a mathematical test the American women of Asian origin remember more positive memories related to the ethnic affiliation. Although, in a situation of a verbal test the American women of Asian origin have more positive memories related to the gender (Hogg and Abram 1988).

Assigning people with special educational needs to different groups leads to a better self-esteem and psychological well-being. The high assessment of a given identification group regarding the qualities of the stigmatized people can be defined as positive stigma.

Of particular interest to science are also the models of preventing the stigma. Researchers analyze two models, while recognizing the consequences of assuming protection strategies and stable development.

The crucial role of motivation is apparent when considering research into deliberate practice. In their classic study of chess expertise, Simon and Chase (1973) suggested that quantity and quality of training could explain inter-individual variation in performance. The '10-year rule' stipulates that a 10-year commitment to high levels of training is the minimum requirement to become an expert. This rule has been applied successfully in many domains, including music, mathematics, swimming middle- and long distance running, figure skating , field hockey, wrestling , and tennis presented the deliberate practice framework, which highlights that future experts need to 'perform training that develops required skills under continuously evolving conditions where training stress and recovery are optimally balanced so that maximal training adaptations occur and training plateaus are minimized.

**Cote (1999)** presents an in-depth picture of a positive family environment. Four Canadian elite or junior elite athletes and their families were selected and interviewed. The interview led to the development of three distinct chronological stages.

| **Investment Years (15 and over)** | <ul><li>Athlete increases commitment to one sport</li><li>Parents show great interest in child-athlete's sport</li><li>Parents help fight set-backs that hinder training progression</li><li>Parents demonstrate different behaviour toward each of their children</li><li>Younger sibling or twin shows bitterness and jealousy toward their older sibling's achievement.</li></ul> |
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| **Specialising Years (13-15 ears)** | • Athlete makes a commitment to one or two sports<br><br>• Parents emphasise school and sport achievement to their child-athlete<br><br>• Parents make a financial and time commitment to their child-athlete<br><br>• Parents develop growing interest in the childathlete's sport<br><br>• Older sibling act as a role model of work ethic. |
| **Sampling Years (6-13 ears)** | • Parents provide opportunities for their children to enjoy sport<br><br>• All children within a family participate in<br><br>various extra-curricular activities<br><br>• Parents recognise a "gift" in the child-athlete |

Bloom's (1985) presents an model of talent development.

| Stage 1 - INITIATION | Stage 2 - DEVELOPMENT | Stage 3 - PERFECTION |
|---|---|---|
| **Performer** | **Performer** | **Performer** |
| • Joyful<br><br>• Playful<br><br>• Excited<br><br>• 'Special'<br><br>• Fun/social oriented | • Hooked/committed<br><br>• Potential identified<br><br>• More serious<br><br>• Task/achievement oriented | • Obsessed/dominates life<br><br>• Personally responsible<br><br>• Independent<br><br>• Willingness to dedicate time<br><br>and effort<br><br>required for highest standards |
| **Mentor** | **Mentor** | **Mentor** |
| • Process centred<br><br>• Kind/cheerful/caring<br><br>• Notice child's | • Superior technical knowledge<br><br>• Strong personal interest<br><br>• Respected | • Master coach<br><br>• Feared/respected<br><br>• Love/hate relationship |

| 'giftedness' | •Strong guidance and discipline<br><br>• Expected quality results | • Successful/demanding |
|---|---|---|
| **Parents** | **Parents** | **Parents** |
| • Positive<br><br>• Shared excitement<br><br>• Supportive<br><br>• Notice child's<br><br>'giftedness'<br><br>• Sought mentors | •More moral and financial support (to maintain mentor relationship)<br><br>• Restrict other activities<br><br>• Concerned for holistic development | • Lesser role |
| **General** | **General** | **General** |
| • Little or no emphasis<br><br>on competition | • Competition used as a yardstick for progress | • Fine tuning |
| **Transition 1** | | **Transition 2** |
| • Development of an athletic identity<br><br>Accelerated development<br><br>Introduction to a more technical coach<br><br>• Becoming more achievement oriented<br><br>• Talent identification<br><br>• Competition becomes yardstick of success<br><br>• Increased commitment | | • Prioritisation of sport in life<br><br>• Psychological rebellion<br><br>• Transition characterised by turning points perhaps stimulated by a successful performance/key event<br><br>• Introduction of a master coach |

**Stage 1 - INITIATION**

At this stage, parents and teachers noticed any gifts to the child. They have a positive attitude and their task is to stimulate the child to work towards the development of talent. By the positive attitude of parents and mentor create conditions for developing talent.

**Stage 2 – DEVELOPMENT**

The second stage is very important, children already accepted as athletes. They have so-called "development of commitment" and is one of the most important components of development. Already expect quality results - rewards, victories that are based on more training and technical knowledge and skills. Mentor is already an important figure in the life of the talented child, parents have a moral and financial support. Competition is one of the main criteria for measuring progress.

**Stage 3 – PERFECTION**

The third stage is characterized by the fact that the role of the mentor is increasing influence of parents decreases, the contractor began to bear its own decisions. The desire to win, overrule other life activities.

Conventional separations in families with children with special needs such as personal stress in individual family members, family dissatisfaction and problems in the implementation of relations in the social network and manifestation of the impasse to life circumstances change abruptly with the optimistic futurie in case of gifts or talent. Begining to realize parenting mainly in the direction of gift or talent and special needs provoked by the disability also requires programming and treatment. There is also an inverse variation. Parents of children with disabilities only focus on their special needs provoked by the disability and not to the special needs related to the presence of a gift or talent. Talent as a manifestation of

special needs is also necessary to seek, develop and nurture. Students are with double developed special needs: associated with owning a disability and developed due possessed talent.

The family context has not only duties but also rights. Parents of gifted children and students with disabilities need to master the techniques and models for measurement, evaluation and diagnosis not only for special educational needs, but also for the possession of gifts and talents.

Generally, these requirements are frightening for parents but it is not about acquiring diagnostic tools but informal methods of measurement and evaluation that every parent inevitably accomplishes in daily communication with the child. Parents' information about the strengths and weaknesses, abilities and skills of the child is important to support the diagnostic results and for various interventions. On the other hand, parents are those who can provide the complete package of documents, studies, opinions of experts on their child, as well as creative products of the child's activity.

The parents' role is imperative for the diagnostic processes of special needs and of gifts and talents and the programming and implementation of interventions. The family context not only has the right to participate in those referred processes, but is morally obliged to advocate for the child by providing opinions, demands, accepts, and to contest and / or reject assessments, diagnosis, procedures and programs related to the child. Undoubtedly, parents need to be partners with teachers and educational leaders in the development of individual programs for dual exceptional student (Levterova, 2015).

Parents not only need to know that every child is entitled to be valued and loved, but also need to feel that their child is valued by teachers, classmates, and all who are in school and social environment. If necessary, parents may be offered to participate in training

programs, seminars, workshops, groups sharing personal experiences, etc., but when you are in such a unique situation of parenting they need to:

- Satisfy the child's basic need of security and affection.

- Parent as any other parents.

- Distinguish the special needs associated with disability from special needs related to the gift or talent of their own child.

- Develop the gifts and talents of your child, along with parenting associated to the disability of their child.

- Use informal methods such as surveillance to identify and diagnose gift or talent.

- Promote effective educational and therapeutic interventions for special educational needs directed towards the disability and directed towards the gift or talent of their child.

Be partners in the educational and therapeutic interventions with teachers and other educational or social specialists. Build a positive interaction with teachers and professionals who work with the child (Levterova, 2015).

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