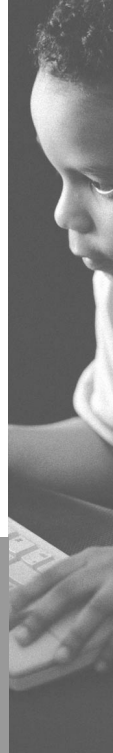

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Introduction

In any field of knowledge, readers have a wide array of terms, facts and information to understand so that they can manipulate the knowledge and use it. Gifted education is one field that impacts upon many facets of teaching. This handbook has been created as a springboard to help you address various issues.

Many of the activities focus upon your own ideas and beliefs to help you determine your own philosophy so it may then be enriched. Other activities are similar to ones you may use in the classroom and clearly demonstrate the wide variety of options available for use with gifted children.

The purpose of this book is to provide readers with a perspective related to the identification and development of the gifted student within the mainstream classroom. It examines the intellectual and emotional needs of gifted children, together with the way in which the teacher (utilising the support of the parent and the community) can nurture, enrich, enhance and extend the gifted child.

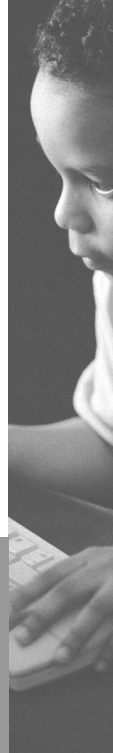
The discussion will enable readers to identify the intellectual and emotional needs of gifted and talented children, and to examine the difficulties encountered by gifted and talented children and their teachers. Readers can create, implement and evaluate educational programs to assist gifted and talented children to develop their gifts, and will develop an understanding of the role of parents and the community in the education of gifted and talented children.

This handbook was compiled to give a comprehensive background on each of the topics discussed. It is not totally inclusive of all the areas that you need to learn in gifted education, but it is a good beginning. Each topic relates to your development as an educator of gifted students. In many cases a bibliography of additional materials is given and it is recommended that you refer to these materials to increase your knowledge.

Teaching gifted children is just like teaching any children – it requires a knowledge of the children you are teaching as well as knowledge about the curriculum and teaching strategies that are available to you. This book will give you some additional knowledge and skills to use when working with gifted students. It does not give all the answers – probably just many more questions – but once you start thinking, your teaching will continue to improve and meet the needs of your students.

Diana Whitton

Diana Whitton



Understanding Giftedness

When we use the terms 'gifted' or 'talented' many concepts come to mind and they relate closely to our own philosophy. What does being gifted mean to you? Do you have special gifts? What are they and what do you do about it?

Below is a list of terms which could be associated with the word 'gifted':

able
more able
exceptional
talented
superior higher-education potential
more receptive learner
more capable learner
high academic potential
bright
nerd
crawler

Add to this list all the terms you associate with the word 'gifted'. Which would you like used to describe yourself? Which are unfavourable terms?

Carefully think about how easy it is to consider negative terms for being gifted. But we hope the word gift 'implies something which is freely given and . . . will benefit the recipient.'¹

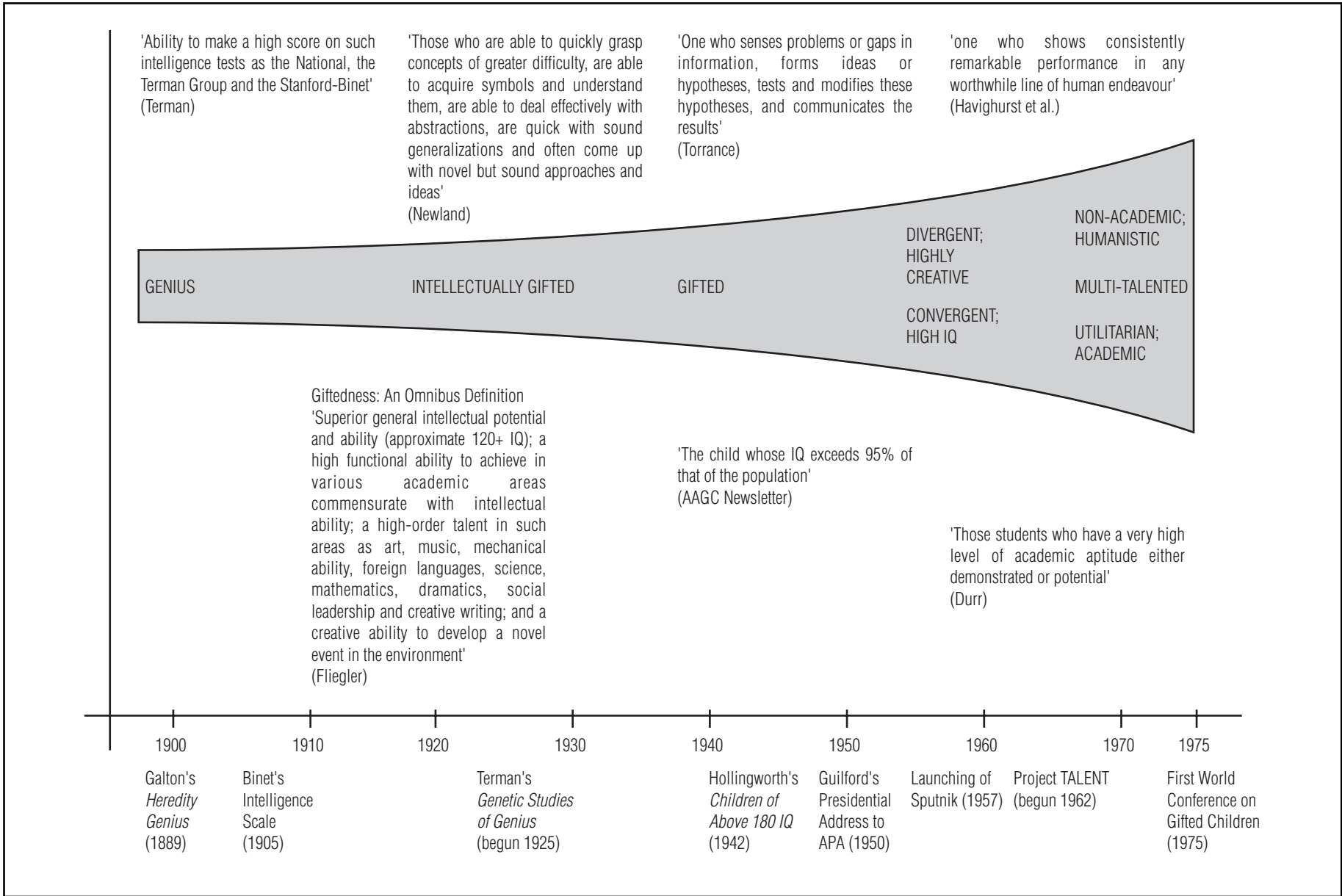
We'll turn now to the historical development of the term 'giftedness'. Cohn aptly demonstrates the changes in the definitions of giftedness using a chart prepared by the New Zealand Council for Education Research in 1976 (see figure 1).² It is easily seen that the initial 'interest was in the genius', but that 'it broadened to include the high-IQ intellectually gifted; eventually, it expanded to take account of the creatively talented and, more recently, those possessing any one of a wide array of talents'.³ This example is one of many concepts of the changing definitions and interpretations of giftedness.

Definitions of Giftedness

Renzulli stated that a definition of giftedness must meet three criteria:

- It must be based on the best available research on the characteristics of gifted individuals, rather than romanticised notions or unsupported opinions.

Figure 1.1 Changing conceptions of giftedness. (Source: Tannenbaum 1983, p. 8)





Identification

- For many educators the identification of the gifted student is paramount. Yes, it is important, but it should not take the place of learning; rather, the learning needs to identify the students who are working at a higher level through the thinking processes used and the products being created.

For many educators the identification of the gifted student is paramount. Yes, it is important, but it should not take the place of learning; rather, the learning needs to identify the students who are working at a higher level through the thinking processes used and the products being created.

The identification of gifted students is a reflection of the philosophical standpoint of a school and the definition of giftedness it has adopted. The definition clearly highlights the types of students who will be catered for and the curricular options that will be available.

There are numerous methods used for identifying gifted students. The most common are:

- individual IQ tests
- group IQ tests
- achievement tests
- class grades
- teacher rating scales
- student products or portfolios
- teacher nomination
- parent nomination
- student self-nomination
- student interview
- peer nomination

Forms of Information for Identification

Renzulli highlighted two distinct forms of information that should be gathered in developing a portfolio for a gifted student. The two forms of information are status information and action information. Status information is any objective and/or subjective knowledge about a student that can be gathered or recorded for the purpose of making decisions. Action information includes information about the student's abilities, interests and learning styles. This information forms the basis of both the identification and individualised programming. Table 3.1 highlights the different forms and types of information that may be utilised.