

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED STUDENTS AND THEIR SOCIAL ADAPTATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

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Abstract

This article explores the unique psychological characteristics of gifted students and the challenges they face with social adaptation within the educational process. The author places special emphasis on the issue of asynchronous development—the imbalance between intellectual advancement and emotional-social maturity often observed in gifted children. The article analyzes the difficulties gifted students encounter in communicating with their peers and educators and proposes modern pedagogical and psychological support mechanisms to facilitate their successful adaptation to the school environment.

Keywords

gifted students, psychological characteristics, social adaptation, adaptation, asynchronous development, emotional intelligence, educational environment.

The 21st century, as an era of global transformations and intellectual capitalization, demands the effective utilization of human resources. The main driving force behind society's socio-economic and scientific-technical progress is talented youth with high intellectual and creative potential. Therefore, one of the fundamental tasks of the education system is not only to provide students with a standard set of knowledge but also to identify their hidden abilities and signs of talent early on and to create a conducive psychological and pedagogical environment for their systematic development.

However, one of the most complex challenges facing modern psychology and pedagogy is the issue of gifted students' adaptation to the educational environment and social reality. Scientific research shows that high cognitive potential does not always guarantee a person's successful socialization (integration into society). On the contrary, in many cases, gifted children face serious difficulties in communicating with peers, educators, and even their immediate social circle due to their unique psychological characteristics. Finding a scientific and practical solution

to this problem remains one of the most pressing priorities of contemporary educational psychology.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, working with talented youth, realizing their abilities, and providing them with comprehensive support has been elevated to the level of one of the highest priority strategic directions of state policy. The goal of creating the foundation for a Third Renaissance in our country is directly linked to nurturing an intellectually mature generation. In this regard, the "Uzbekistan - 2030" strategy has defined large-scale tasks for the radical reform of the education system and the realization of youth potential.

In recent years, important legal and regulatory documents have been adopted to elevate the system of supporting talented youth to a new institutional level. In particular, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-61 of March 26, 2025, "On measures to implement the tasks set during the open dialogue of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan with youth," marked a new turning point in expanding educational opportunities for talented youth and providing them with social incentives [1].

Furthermore, in the President's presentation on March 27, 2025, regarding the improvement of the system for supporting talented youth, it was specifically noted that there are currently 14 Presidential schools, 185 specialized schools, and 9 creative schools operating in our country, and their advanced teaching systems are being introduced into general education schools as well. Most importantly, this presentation specified that the new international-standard educational programs being created for talented youth will not only consist of fundamental and specialized subjects, but will also include:

a "Leadership and Social Activity" course complex.

This strategic approach signifies that developing not only the intellectual (hard skills) but also the socio-emotional (soft skills) competencies of gifted students is a pressing pedagogical and psychological task at the state level. Indeed, within the framework of this vast infrastructure and the opportunities created by the state, the smooth social adaptation of gifted students to the school environment plays a fundamental role in their future development as worthy members of society.

In scientific literature, the nature of gifted children is often characterized by the asynchronous (disproportionate) development of the cognitive domain. L.S. Vygotsky [2], J. Piaget [3], and contemporary psychologists, including foreign and local researchers, have proven that the intellectual advancement in gifted children does not always proceed synchronously (in parallel) with their emotional and social maturity. While a gifted student's mental capacity may be at the level of a 15-

year-old, their emotional reactions and social experience may correspond to their actual biological age (e.g., 10 years old).

This psychological imbalance creates several complex socio-psychological problems and adaptation crises within the educational process:

Communication barriers and alienation: Gifted students differ sharply from their peers in their range of interests and depth of thought. In a typical classroom environment, this leads to boredom, an inability to find common ground with peers, and consequently, social isolation.

The problem of conformity and "hidden talent": Some gifted students feel compelled to deliberately hide their high abilities and demonstrate lower performance in order to avoid rejection by the group (class) and to be like everyone else (to achieve social adaptation). This causes the individual's inner potential to diminish.

Perfectionism and high anxiety: Extremely high expectations of oneself and others can lead to a persistent fear of failure (phobia), neurosis, and stress in gifted children.

From this perspective, it is not enough to simply observe the intellectual advancement of gifted children; their successful adaptation to the school community and social groups, along with the enhancement of their emotional intelligence, necessitates systematic scientific research.

The objective is to identify the social adaptation challenges of gifted students in the modern educational process, based on a systematic analysis of their unique psychological characteristics, and to develop an effective psychological-pedagogical model and a set of practical recommendations aimed at their successful socialization into both general and specialized school environments.

To achieve this goal, the following specific scientific and practical tasks must be addressed within the scope of this research:

Scientific and theoretical analysis: To conduct a comparative analysis of international and domestic scientific approaches and theories related to the psychology of gifted children and their social adaptation, and to assess the extent to which the problem has been studied;

Differentiation of psychological characteristics: To systematize the internal (personal) and external (social) factors that cause an imbalance (asynchrony) between intellectual growth and socio-emotional development in gifted students;

Conducting empirical research: To identify and analyze, using experimental methods, the adaptive barriers (such as bullying, conformity, and isolation) that arise in the interactions of gifted students with their peers, teachers, and parents in the modern school environment;

Integration with state programs: To substantiate a mechanism for incorporating elements of adaptability into educational programs, based on the requirements for enhancing youth's "social activity and leadership skills" as outlined in Decree No. PF-61 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan;

Practical model and recommendations: To formulate a set of correctional-developmental programs (a model) and methodological recommendations for school psychologists and educators, designed to develop the emotional intelligence of gifted children and ensure their social integration.

A systematic study of giftedness requires, first and foremost, a deep understanding of its multi-component structure and its cognitive and emotional dimensions. Modern psychological science does not view giftedness solely on the foundation of a high intelligence quotient but takes its complex constituent parts into account. Specifically, as substantiated in Joseph Renzulli's "Three-Ring" model, giftedness manifests at the intersection of traits such as above-average intellectual ability, a high degree of creativity, and task commitment [4]. However, such specific advancement in the cognitive domain can create unexpected complexities and contradictions in the inner psychological world of a gifted student. In this regard, the concept of asynchronous development introduced by the French psychologist Jean-Charles Terrassier is of particular scientific value. According to this concept, the intellectual, emotional, and physical systems in a gifted child do not develop at the same rate [5]. This indicates that while a student's mental potential may be several years ahead of their chronological age, their emotional reactions and social experiences may correspond to, or even lag behind, their biological age.

Against this backdrop of asynchrony, the nervous systems of gifted students are distinguished by their extreme sensitivity to external and internal stimuli. Kazimierz Dabrowski's theory of overexcitability substantiates this condition through heightened sensitivities in the intellectual, imaginal, emotional, psychomotor, and sensual spheres. A gifted child not only feels a need to seek truth and ask incessant questions but also possesses deep empathy, high physical energy, and an exceptionally strong perception of surrounding sounds and colors. Such profound emotional sensitivity and intellectual asynchrony later serve as key crisis points in their adaptation to the social environment, particularly the educational process, and present them with unique challenges within a traditional school setting.

Although social adaptation is the process of an individual's active adjustment to environmental conditions and the ability to establish constructive relationships with group members, the traditional educational environment in mainstream

schools often fails to be a conducive setting for the adaptation of gifted students. This situation systematically leads to social maladaptation. The development of maladaptation is linked to several micro-social factors, the first and most crucial of which is a crisis in communication with their peer group. While a gifted child may find the superficial interests of their age group boring, their peers, in turn, tend to label them as "weird," exclude them from the group, and consequently subject them to psychological pressure (bullying). Fearing rejection by the group and weary of loneliness, a gifted student is often forced to choose the "chameleon effect," or social conformity. That is, to fit in with the class and be like everyone else, they begin to deliberately hide their talent, give simple answers in class, and artificially suppress their intellect. In psychology, this phenomenon is known as the underachievement syndrome, which, in the long term, leads to the complete stifling of an individual's talent.

Furthermore, the misguided approaches and ingrained stereotypes of educators exacerbate this adaptation crisis. While many teachers envision a gifted child as merely an obedient student who excels in all subjects, they negatively perceive the non-standard thinking of creatively and intellectually gifted children, their non-conformity to classroom norms, and their tendency to question the teacher's opinions. Pressure or neglect from a teacher towards such a student can trigger cognitive dissonance and destructive reactions in the child regarding the educational system and social reality. Therefore, ensuring the effective social adaptation of gifted students to the school environment requires the implementation of comprehensive psychological-pedagogical models aimed not only at enhancing their intellect but also at developing their emotional intelligence. As specified in the decrees of the Head of our State, incorporating leadership and social engagement skills into the curriculum is a strategic solution to this problem.

To form a successful adaptation model, it is necessary to move away from the traditional pedagogical approach and transition to an integrative-adaptive scientific one, as well as to introduce scientific-pedagogical differentiation (acceleration and enrichment). As part of the enrichment strategy, students should be given individual research projects and problem-based assignments, and they must learn to perform the role of an intellectual leader in team projects without setting their intellect in opposition to their classmates. Within the framework of the school's psychological services, soft skills (humanitarian skills) training should be organized for gifted students, aimed at developing frustration tolerance, communicative flexibility, and empathy. In this process, subject tests alone are insufficient to monitor a student's adaptation dynamics; educational testology and psychodiagnostics must work in harmony. It is essential to regularly conduct

pedagogical and psychological monitoring of the student's cognitive development, as well as their socio-psychological status, anxiety level, and adaptability coefficient. In conclusion, solving the social adaptation problem of gifted students is a task not only for the school psychologist but for the entire educational ecosystem. By integrating the experience of specialized and Presidential schools, created at the state level, into general education schools, we can prevent the social alienation of gifted children and fully channel their intellectual potential toward the country's development.

Conclusion: Systematic theoretical and practical analysis shows that the social adaptation of gifted students within the educational process is one of the most complex and urgent issues in modern pedagogical psychology. As established during the research, high intellectual potential does not automatically ensure an individual's successful socialization in society and the school community. On the contrary, asynchronous development between the cognitive and emotional spheres, along with characteristics of extremely high sensitivity, can cause serious adaptation crises in a child. Factors such as rejection by peers in the school environment, the intentional concealment of abilities due to the "chameleon effect," and the negative impact of pedagogical stereotypes not only lead to the diminishment of personal potential but also create a foundation for deep psychological trauma and social isolation. From this perspective, it is critically important to abandon traditional educational models and implement an integrative-adaptive approach aimed at developing not only the intellectual but also the emotional intelligence of gifted students.

The large-scale reforms being implemented in our country to build the foundation of the Third Renaissance, particularly the mandate to support talented youth and develop their leadership and social engagement skills as defined in the decrees and resolutions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, further enhance the practical value of this research. To ensure the smooth socialization of gifted students, schools must systematically implement not only differentiated curricula but also psychological training programs that increase their frustration tolerance and communicative flexibility. In this regard, the combined monitoring of pedagogical testology and psychodiagnostic methods allows for real-time tracking of the student's cognitive and emotional state. In conclusion, it should be emphasized that by successfully integrating the best practices of Presidential, creative, and specialized schools into general education schools and by providing socio-psychological protection for gifted children within the school ecosystem, the foundation will be laid for a new model that fully mobilizes their potential for the country's development.

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