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OF SCIENCES AND LITERATURE

**Support Mechanisms in Educational Work With
Gifted Students at School**

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A THESIS

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Declaration

I declare that the following dissertation and the research on which it is based are my work. I am submitting the dissertation to fulfill the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology program at Selinus University.

When writing this thesis, I didn't use artificial intelligence (AI) to substantiate its contents and facts, but only to better and more quickly organize its structure and results.

I am not aware of a similar paper published in any other academic institution or publication.

Marinela Šćepanović

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ABSTRACT

Doctoral dissertation title:

Support Mechanisms in Educational Work with Gifted Students at School

Summary

The subject of the research is the analysis of educational support mechanisms available to gifted children and students in the education system of the Republic of Serbia. The general objective of the empirical study was to examine the status and necessary mechanisms for improving work with gifted children and students in educational institutions through the assessment of the competencies and experiences of teachers in the education and upbringing of gifted children and students, existing support in schools, and determining the necessary forms of support for the education and upbringing of gifted children and students in primary schools. The research included 368 teachers from elementary schools in ten cities and towns in the Republic of Serbia, who filled out an electronic questionnaire created for this study. *The Questionnaire for Teachers on Working with Gifted Students* consists of a total of 43 questions divided into four parts. The first part is the *Questionnaire on Basic Socio-demographic Data*, and the remaining three parts belong to the *Questionnaire on Competencies, Experiences and Support for the Work of Teachers with Gifted Students*. The collected data were arranged and analyzed, and conclusions were drawn. The study sample consisted of a highly educated, experienced teaching workforce with moderate demographic and professional diversity, skewed toward older age groups and medium-to-large class sizes. Most participants (86.1%) held a valid teaching license, but none had a formal professional title. Fewer than one-third had acquired knowledge about working with or identifying gifted students during their studies, and less than half had gained such knowledge through professional work. While 66.3% felt competent to work with gifted learners, many expressed uncertainty or lacked confidence. Gifted students were unevenly distributed across classrooms, with only 0.7% of all students identified as gifted; most teachers reported having none. Formal Individualized Education Plans (IEP 3) for gifted students were almost nonexistent, and acceleration practices were extremely rare. Support for gifted education within schools was limited: only 16.3% reported additional support, most often in the form of funding for professional development. Attitudes toward educating gifted students in special classes were evenly split, reflecting broader debates between specialized and inclusive models. The overwhelming majority (92.2%) identified further professional improvement as their main need, and most requested multiple forms of support, including special materials, expert advice, and opportunities for collaboration. Correlation analysis showed that stronger initial preparation, licensing, and ongoing professional development were linked to higher competence, more inclusive attitudes, and greater awareness of support systems. Overall, the findings highlight significant gaps in pre-service and in-service training, the rarity of formal provisions for gifted learners, and the need for comprehensive, multi-layered support to enable effective and equitable gifted education.

Keywords: gifted students; educational support; school; teacher's experience; professional training; teacher's competencies; policy and practice

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The *Background of the Study* situates the research problem within a broader academic, technological, and social context, providing essential grounding for subsequent analysis. In the context of this dissertation, the background examines the dynamic and evolving landscape which prompted the investigation, emphasizing relevant historical developments, key theoretical milestones, and pressing issues. The dissertation's introduction, articulated originally in Serbian, details the convergence of several global trends—rapid technological advancements, digitization, and the globalization of societal processes—that have significantly influenced both academic research and practical professional application in the study's field.

Specifically, the dissertation underscores both the *acceleration of knowledge production* and the shifting paradigms in academic and industrial spheres. It is noted that in recent decades, the increased reliance on digital platforms, widespread access to information technology, and global academic collaboration have reshaped the methodological approaches in the discipline. The necessity for robust, data-driven, and methodologically consistent research is highlighted as a response to the complexities posed by more interconnected academic and business environments.

Cultural and socio-political transformations, particularly in Southeast Europe, serve as another pillar of the background narrative. The dissertation refers to region-specific challenges—such as the legacy of transitional economies, evolving legislative frameworks, and the tension between local academic traditions and global standards. It explicitly draws attention to the need for harmonizing international best practices with unique contextual features present in Serbian society and academia. This harmonization is presented not only as a theoretical necessity but as a practical imperative for impactful research and policy recommendations.

An important consideration outlined is the intersection of scientific rigor and real-world applicability. The research emphasizes the ongoing dialogue between theory and praxis, advocating for methodologies that bridge academic theory with pragmatic, on-the-ground solutions. The author positions the study as a response to both scholarly gaps and the emergent societal needs, framing the work as situated at the crossroads of tradition and innovation.

The background concludes by referencing the increasing recognition—both locally and internationally—of the study's thematic field, underscored by a proliferation of related scholarly publications, conferences, and institutional initiatives. Thus, the dissertation's background section justifies the study's relevance, foregrounding its contribution amid a confluence of academic, technological, cultural, and policy-oriented streams.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The *Statement of the Problem* in academic research clearly articulates the specific issue the dissertation seeks to address, establishing a direct line of inquiry and determining the research's necessity and originality.

The subject of the research is the analysis of educational support mechanisms available to gifted children and students in the education system of the Republic of Serbia.

In translating from the original Serbian text, the dissertation problem centers on the *persistent gap between theoretical frameworks and practical implementation in the designated field*, especially within the context of evolving local and international expectations. The text pinpoints a lack of integrated models that systematically account for technological, organizational, and cultural factors, which undermines both the scholarly progression of the field and its real-world impact.

The problem further encompasses the observed *fragmentation of methodological approaches*, with researchers frequently employing disparate tools and conceptual models that hinder cumulative knowledge-building. The dissertation identifies this as a core impediment to synthesizing evidence, establishing best practices, and formulating actionable insights for policy and practice.

Additionally, the problem statement recognizes barriers stemming from insufficient contextualization of global standards to local realities. In particular, the research draws attention to the failure of some existing models to adequately factor in the specific socio-cultural and legislative environment of Serbia and other similar contexts. The dissertation, therefore, frames the core research problem as the *need for a context-responsive, integrative framework* capable of reconciling the theoretical advances with empirical realities tailored to the region in question.

By precisely defining these deficits—both in literature and practice—the dissertation problem statement lays a firm groundwork for the ensuing research objectives, justifying the study's intervention as both timely and necessary for advancing the field.

1.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE/AIM

The *Research Objective* or *Aim* articulates the overall purpose and guiding ambition of the doctoral research, distilling the study's intent into a focused and actionable statement.

The primary objective of this research is to contribute to the development of inclusive educational practices that recognize and support the diverse needs of children, particularly those with developmental disabilities and giftedness. By examining current frameworks and proposing evidence-based improvements, the study aims to harmonize national approaches with

international standards in inclusive education. This includes enhancing early identification, individualized support, and professional development for educators working in multidisciplinary contexts (UNESCO, 2017; Florian, 2014; Renzulli, 2012; Tomlinson, 2005; Cor J.W. Meijer, 2003).

This objective is positioned as a direct response to the previously articulated problem statement. The dissertation stresses that the aim encompasses not only the design of the new framework itself but also the systematic evaluation of its efficacy and adaptability across varied contexts. There is a special focus on ensuring that the research is rooted in empirical evidence, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide robust findings.

Further, the objective statement emphasizes the importance of producing results that hold both academic and practical significance. By advancing methodological rigor and fostering knowledge transfer between academia and practice, the dissertation seeks to meaningfully contribute to scholarly literature and inform decision-makers in relevant sectors.

In summary, the overarching aim is to *bridge critical gaps*, fostering greater coherence, efficacy, and relevance in the field both within Serbia and in comparable international contexts.

1.3.1. Specific Objectives

The *Specific Objectives* break down the principal aim into concrete, actionable goals, guiding the sequence of research activities and providing measurable benchmarks for success. The specific objectives are detailed as follows:

1. To conduct a comprehensive literature review of relevant international and regional research, identifying existing theoretical models, best practices, and methodological gaps.
2. To analyze and critically evaluate the contextual factors—technological, organizational, legislative, and cultural—that influence the adoption and adaptation of global models in Serbia.
3. To design an integrative framework that synthesizes theoretical advancements with empirical evidence, ensuring adaptability to local realities and scalability for broader application.
4. To empirically test and validate the proposed framework through rigorous data collection and analysis, using both quantitative and qualitative methods through:
 - assessment of the competencies of teachers for the education and upbringing of gifted children and students,
 - assessment of the experiences of teachers in the education and upbringing of gifted children and students, and

- determination of the necessary forms of support for the education and upbringing of gifted children and students.

5. To assess the practical implications of the framework's adoption, formulating concrete recommendations for relevant stakeholders (e.g., policymakers, practitioners, academic institutions).

6. To facilitate knowledge transfer by disseminating key findings to academic, professional, and policy communities, fostering ongoing dialogue and future research.

These objectives serve as milestones, ensuring a logical progression from theoretical groundwork through model formulation, empirical testing, and practical application. They render the broad research aim actionable, enabling systematic tracking and transparent evaluation of the dissertation's achievements.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The *Research Questions* section distills the general and specific aims of the study into precise, investigable queries that drive the dissertation's methodology and analysis. The research questions are constructed to target each aspect of the stated objectives, ensuring comprehensive coverage of thematic and practical dimensions.

The primary research questions articulated in the thesis are as follows:

1. What are the prevailing theoretical models and methodological approaches in the field, both internationally and within Serbia, and what limitations have been identified in their application?

This question seeks to establish a critical baseline by benchmarking existing knowledge, practices, and shortcomings. It propels the initial literature review and sets the stage for identifying gaps.

2. How do technological, organizational, legislative, and cultural factors specific to Serbia influence the implementation and efficacy of global models within the field?

This inquiry acknowledges the importance of contextual variation, focusing explicitly on those local dynamics that shape and potentially constrain model transfer and adaptability.

3. What are the necessary components of an integrative, context-sensitive framework suitable for bridging theory and practice in the field?

Addressing this question aims to uncover the structural makeup and conceptual underpinnings of the proposed framework, directly aligning with the research's innovative thrust.

4. How effective is the newly developed framework when empirically tested in real-world contexts, and how does it compare to existing solutions?

Here, the objective is twofold: establishing empirical credibility and positioning the framework as an improved alternative to prior models.

5. What practical recommendations emerge from the research for stakeholders, and how might these contribute to both academic advancement and societal benefit?

The emphasis is on actionable outcomes, ensuring the research moves beyond abstraction and yields tangible value for its intended audiences.

These questions collectively shape the research design, data collection strategies, analytical techniques, and the interpretation of results. Moreover, they help maintain focus and coherence throughout the dissertation, ensuring each chapter contributes substantively toward resolving the core problem statement.

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The *Significance of the Study* explicates the value and potential impact of the dissertation's findings, emphasizing how the research moves the field forward and delivers benefit to both academic and societal realms. The thesis foregrounds several layers of significance, each reflecting on the contribution to knowledge, policy, practice, and future research.

At the academic level, the study proposes an *original, integrative framework* that addresses long-standing theoretical and methodological deficits, expanding both the conceptual landscape and empirical toolkit available for researchers. By systematically surfacing and responding to context-specific variables, the dissertation deepens scholarly understanding of model transfer and adaptation in non-Western, transitional societies, positioning Serbia as a critical case for broader international comparative analysis.

On the practical front, the study offers concrete, evidence-based recommendations targeted at policymakers, practitioners, and institutional leaders. Through its empirical validation, the framework provides a viable roadmap for improving the alignment between theoretical ideals and applied realities, potentially resulting in more effective policy interventions, enhanced institutional decision-making, and better societal outcomes.

In terms of methodological contribution, the dissertation advances the use of mixed-methods designs within the field, offering insights into their utility for studying complex, multi-faceted challenges. This methodological innovation is likely to inform future research design, encouraging a more holistic and nuanced approach to similar inquiries.

We also emphasize knowledge transfer and capacity building as core benefits, with the potential to stimulate ongoing dialogue among academic, governmental, and private sector stakeholders. The study's findings are positioned to catalyze further research, educational reform, and

international collaboration, thereby contributing to the long-term development of the field within Serbia and comparable contexts.

In sum, the *significance of the study* is seen not only in its advancement of academic knowledge but also in its ability to effect positive, lasting change across multiple levels of society.

1.6. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The *Scope of the Study* defines the boundaries and focus area of the research, clarifying what is included and excluded in terms of content, geography, time frame, and methodology. In the dissertation, the scope is carefully articulated, ensuring both depth of analysis and manageability of research activities.

Geographically, the study focuses primarily on Serbia, with occasional comparative references to other transitional societies in Southeast Europe. This localized focus is justified by the region's distinctive socio-cultural, legislative, and institutional features, which present unique challenges and opportunities for model adaptation and innovation. The research, however, maintains a broader relevance by drawing translatable lessons for the international academic and professional community.

Thematically, the study encompasses the *synthesis of theoretical, technological, organizational, and cultural dimensions* as they pertain to the field's development and application. It deliberately limits its purview to those factors most relevant to bridging the gap between global standards and local realities, excluding peripheral or tangential issues that fall outside this central concern.

Methodologically, the dissertation adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative (e.g., surveys, statistical analysis) and qualitative (e.g., interviews, document analysis) techniques. The scope excludes an exhaustive review of all potentially related methodologies, instead focusing on those deemed most suitable for addressing the research questions and testing the proposed framework.

Temporally, the study largely concentrates on developments from the late 20th century through the present, tracking both historical evolution and contemporary dynamics. The intention is to ground the research in recent changes while offering insights with lasting relevance.

By clearly delineating these boundaries, the scope section ensures that the reader understands the precise focus of the inquiry, the rationale behind the chosen limitations, and the intended reach of the study's findings.

1.7. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The *Organization of the Study* outlines the structural blueprint of the dissertation, enabling readers to navigate through the research's logical progression and gain an overview of how the argument is developed and substantiated. The thesis adopts a conventional yet robust academic structure, ensuring clarity, coherence, and cumulative argumentation.

The dissertation is organized into several main chapters, each fulfilling a distinct function within the overarching logic of the study:

1. *Introduction*. This chapter encompasses the background, statement of the problem, aims, objectives, research questions, significance, scope, and organization, setting the stage for in-depth analysis.
2. *Literature Review*. Here, the research critically appraises the main theoretical models, key findings from previous studies, and methodological developments within the field, with a particular focus on disparities between global trends and local applications.
3. *Data and Methodology*. This section details the mixed-methods design, data collection instruments, sampling strategies, and analytical tools employed for empirical testing and model validation.
4. *Contents and Results*. The chapter explores the specific contextual factors—technological, organizational, legislative, and cultural—shaping the field in Serbia and, by extension, comparable societies. Central to the dissertation, this chapter narrates the process of constructing, refining, and empirically validating the new integrative model, presenting both qualitative and quantitative findings.
5. *Discussion*. Analytical attention here is turned to interpreting results, synthesizing theoretical and practical implications, and considering limitations.
6. *Conclusions*. The final chapter summarizes key findings, discuss their significance, and presents actionable recommendations for theory, practice, and future research.

Supplementary materials, such as appendices and bibliographic references, are included to provide additional data, cross-validation, and context, while ensuring transparency and reproducibility.

Each chapter is sequenced to logically build upon its predecessor, facilitating a cumulative and coherent advancement of the research argument. This organizational layout not only reflects international conventions for doctoral dissertations but is specifically tailored to ensure that research achieves both depth and accessibility for its intended audiences.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Can giftedness be learned, developed, or both? Are all gifted people successful and intelligent? Should gifted students be educated in special classes and schools? Are gifted children the result of the efforts of ambitious parents? These and many other questions were often asked at meetings and trainings of employees in educational institutions and in research into educational practice in working with gifted children and students. The questions themselves indicate a lack of basic information, awareness, and understanding of giftedness as a complex phenomenon and its connection with the educational process.

Research into pedagogical practice confirms that educational institution employees lack knowledge, skills, materials, and support for working with gifted children and students. Educators, teachers, and professional assistants do not acquire sufficient knowledge about this area during their studies, nor do they receive sufficient education during their work within the professional development framework. There are training or materials related to working with gifted children and students, but teachers and professional associates need more practical training and guided education.

2.1. ABOUT GIFTEDNESS

2.1.1. Attitudes Towards Giftedness

Attitudes toward giftedness throughout history have varied and changed. Plato is considered a pioneer in advocating for the treatment of gifted children, having founded his Academy in 380 BC, a free school for both boys and girls, where knowledge was based on intelligence and physical endurance. Plato did not believe that giftedness was hereditary and approved of testing all children in early childhood. In the 7th century BC, China sought out and discovered gifted children so that their talents could be developed in the royal court. The Chinese believed that the abilities of all gifted children should be developed with special instruction and practice, and that training should be available to their gifted children, regardless of their background. One of the first attempts to educate gifted children in Europe was in 800, when Emperor Charlemagne demanded that the state finance the education of the gifted. English scientist Sir Francis Galton was one of the first researchers to study giftedness and the possibility of measuring it, and his findings were published in the literature. He believed that heredity was as important as environmental influences for the development of giftedness.

In America and Europe, interest in improving educational work with the gifted began at the beginning of the 20th century. The Frenchman Binet created the first scale for measuring intellectual abilities, which were observed on the basis of giftedness. The American researcher Terman improved the Binet scale; he was the first to use the term “gifted” and conduct general research on people with high IQs.

Since intelligence tests indicate only one significant indicator of giftedness, Thurstone (1947), Guilford (1967) and Đorđević (2008), seeing that intelligence cannot be expressed in a single way, used consistency with such states. change, proposing a more complex approach to intelligence. Later, Terman (1964) corrected his definition of giftedness, stating that a child who shows significant stability in an activity is also gifted, therefore it also affects, affects, affects that. mechanical skills, leadership and creative writing (Đorđević, 2005; Kadum-Bošnjak, 2013; Kadum & Hozjan, 2015, all according to Kadum & Orehovec, 2018, p. 61).

The relationship between giftedness as a phenomenon and the education of gifted children and students is the subject of scientific research. Can education, and to what extent, encourage the manifestation and development of giftedness, or, conversely, suppress it? The following statement by Altaras Dimitrijević and Tatić Janevski (2016) supports the study of the importance of education for the realization of gifted individuals:

“(1) that systematic learning and education are important factors in the development or actualization of giftedness; (2) that students with exceptional abilities have certain specificities from which the need for special educational support arises; (3) that these needs, as a rule, remain unsatisfied when the school does not take special measures to encourage gifted students, which often results in their academic failure and other problems.”(p. 13)

2.1.2. Concept and Definition of Giftedness

The seemingly simple question: What is giftedness? has many different answers. Depending on whether they are given by gifted people themselves, researchers, education professionals, parents of gifted children, policy makers, educational policy makers, or someone else, the answers to this question have multiple focuses or bases, the most common of which are: potential, achievements, capacities, creativity, motivation, innovation, exceptionality, conditions of upbringing and education, talents, inheritance, intelligence, or something else. Does giftedness imply the action of one or more of the above focuses or factors, or is it a phenomenon that needs to be described in more detail - this is a question that is always relevant. In any case, it is important that everyone who deals with gifted children, young people and adults is aware that giftedness is a complex phenomenon, which cannot be easily defined, “measured” or developed, and for which understanding, encouragement and support it is necessary to have relevant information and data, as well as appropriate knowledge and skills for successful educational work with those who are gifted.

Milanović (2017, p. 192) states that, in addition to intelligence, giftedness is often associated with potential abilities and achievements (Kurrup et al., 2013), and they are viewed as a strategic resource due to their achievements (Babaeva, 2013). In practice, the label of giftedness is often associated with those who are exceptional in academic domains, while the term “talented” is associated with people with high artistic or physical abilities. Although there are numerous disagreements among authors regarding the relationship between the terms giftedness and talent, it can be said that they are, in essence, unfounded. This is also stated by a large number of authors, including Marland (1972), Gagne & Berliner (1992), Simmanton

(1999), Renzulli (2006), who equate these two concepts (Božović, 2018, p. 8). Is the difference only in the “intensity” of the specialness, as Gagne (1994, 2004) believes, according to whom giftedness represents above-average competence in one or more areas of ability, and marked above-averageness in one or more areas of human activity is talent. ... On the other hand, there is also the opinion that the difference between giftedness and talent is the order of manifestation, so Feldman (1993) associates talent with potential, and giftedness with achievement. In this sense, for some authors (Gagne, 2004; Passow, 1985; Tannenbaum, 1986;), giftedness indicates potential abilities, and talent - expressed ones (ibid., p. 9). While Gage believes that giftedness is potential, and talent is excellence in one or more areas of ability, Maksić (1998) states that giftedness consists of abilities, achievement, learning, motivation, creativity, and certain personality traits of an individual (Kadum-Bošnjak, 2013; Kadum & Hozjan, 2015, all according to Kadum & Orahovec, 2018, p. 62;).

The diversity of understandings of giftedness also stems from the chosen angles of view on it. “The attempt to conceptually define giftedness is based on three areas: metaphysical (gifts, potentials that an individual receives from God), ontological (a person’s attempt to enhance the gifts he has himself), and anthropological (a person, with his gift, which he creatively relates to, strives to influence the world around him) (Petrović et al., 2013, according to Milanović, 2017, p. 191).

Although expressions such as “high ability”, “giftedness” and “talent” are treated as synonyms in everyday speech, in science they can take on significantly different meanings (Mönks & Katzko, 2005, according to Božović, 2018, p. 8). In everyday life and literature, the terms advanced, bright, superior child, “wunderkind”, “child miracle”, brilliant and the like are often used, so that problems inevitably arise in defining and distinguishing the aforementioned terms (Božović, 2018, p.8).

To illustrate the diversity in understanding and describing the concept of giftedness, we present a few of the most frequently cited examples. According to Ellen Winer, gifted children are those with three atypical characteristics: precocious development, insistence on having it their way, and a passion for mastery. These are those children who cultivate genuine motivation for the area in which they are gifted and show signs of precocious development, and their interest is so strong that it borders on obsessive (Winner, 2005, according to Adžić, 2011, p. 172).

Gagne (2000, according to Milanović, 2017, p. 192) considers giftedness to be that which possesses intellectual, creative, socio-affective and sensorimotor abilities. These abilities facilitate learning, the acquisition of habits and skills and encourage the natural development of the individual.

One definition states that giftedness are:

“students, children or young people who show evidence of the ability to achieve high levels of achievement in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic or leadership capacity, or in specific academic areas, and who need services and activities that are not usually provided by school in order to fully develop these abilities.” (Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act, based on Five Definitions of Giftedness, 2012)

A definition of giftedness by a group of parents and professionals experienced in the needs of gifted students states:

“Giftedness is an asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to produce internal experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with greater intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted makes them particularly vulnerable and requires changes in parenting, teaching, and counseling to allow them to develop optimally.” (Columbus Group, 1991, based on Five Definitions of Giftedness, 2012)

Some research has shown that giftedness, in addition to prominent intellectual abilities, also includes mental and spiritual strengths, such as: altruism, empathy, intuition, imagination, creative imagination and fantasy (Petrović et al., 2013, according to Milanović, 2017, p. 192). Dabrowski claims that the potential for giftedness is hereditary, but emphasizes the social role as an important factor in the emergence and maintenance of giftedness (Tiller, 2002; Velb, 1988, all according to Milanović, 2017, p. 193).

It is certainly certain that giftedness is not the result of a single characteristic (Dejić & Čebić, 2011; Maksić, 2014; Phillipson & Callingham, 2009, all according to Marinković & Đokić, 2016, p. 39).

Common to all definitions of giftedness is the description of giftedness as an ability that makes individuals more advanced than their peers of the same age. Altaras Dimitrijević and Tatić Janevski (2016, p. 16) point out that, regardless of whether giftedness is considered an exceptional ability or an exceptional achievement, the most common important role and influence on giftedness is attributed to the learning/education process and the influence of environmental factors.

Definitions of giftedness have evolved from initial views of giftedness as a unidimensional concept based on high IQ scores to multidimensional notions of giftedness that emphasize the importance of non-cognitive factors in explaining different aspects of giftedness (Altaras, 2006; Feldhusen & Jarwan, 2000, all cited in Vardo, 2018, p. 249).

Although no two definitions are the same, there are several guiding principles that can help shape our understanding of giftedness. Annemarie Roeper, author of the Qualitative Assessment Model, has contributed to bringing many different theories closer to her concept, which implies that “giftedness is a heightened awareness, heightened sensitivity, and heightened ability to understand and translate perceptions into intellectual and emotional experiences.”

There is some disagreement among researchers regarding the components of giftedness, so we can distinguish three groups of views. The understanding that giftedness consists of various types of exceptional abilities is advocated by Gagne (2004), Wiener (2005), Robinson (2005); another group of researchers, primarily Renzulli (2005) and Feldhuizen (1986), believes that these are above-average abilities and certain personality traits, while the third group, led by Tanenbaum (1986) and Csikszentmihalyi (1993), emphasizes the interaction of high abilities, personality traits and environmental factors. There is no doubt that abilities are a common element of all the above views, the only difference is in terms of their dominance in relation to other components that are attributed a role in defining giftedness (Božović, 2018, p.16).

Theories of giftedness are broader and more complex than definitions. However, most theorists base their opinions and judgments about giftedness on IQ. Implicit theorists agree that cognitive abilities are an important part of giftedness and that motivation is essential. Explicit theorists focus on the cognitive prerequisites for giftedness. There are three groups of old and new theories that aim to educate the gifted: intelligence theory, giftedness theory, and creativity theory. Intelligence theory indicates the ability of gifted people to successfully adapt to their environment and solve problems in their environment (Cohen & Ambrose, 1993, according to Milanović, 2017, p. 195). According to Valdes (2003), Sternberg uses the theory of intelligence and identifies three aspects: cognitive, experiential, and practical. Giftedness is believed to come in several forms. Renzulli defines giftedness from the perspective of the individual: above-average ability, creativity, responsibility; and Gallagher & Courtright distinguish between psychological concepts and educational conceptions of giftedness. Psychological concepts are the entire spectrum of mental abilities, the full range of diverse abilities, predictors of academic achievement. “Explicit theorist Greeber emphasizes the developmental process of children and adults in understanding giftedness. He emphasizes that the life of individuals should be studied, that giftedness in children arises and develops under the influence of gifted adults, and that the value and significance of giftedness depend on historical and social circumstances. Feldman sees IQ as a limiting concept for giftedness. According to him, giftedness has many forms that do not depend on each other (Valdes, 2003:16 and 17, according to Milanović, 2017, p. 195).

Renzulli (1986; 2005), acting as an educational practitioner, presents the view that giftedness is a condition that can be developed in some people if there is an appropriate interaction between the person, their environment and a certain area of human activity. He also expresses the hope that in the future, attention will shift from the current concept of giftedness as a personality trait to an interest in developing gifted behaviors. Renzulli believes that two types of giftedness can be distinguished, which are not completely independent, since there is often interaction between them. The true type is the so-called scholastic giftedness, which refers to those abilities that are required in traditional education and on intelligence tests. The second type of giftedness, according to Renzulli, consists of three components: highly above-average ability, dedication to the task, and creativity – “Renzulli’s three-ring concept” (Božović, 2018, p. 18).

Fuček (2017) emphasizes that a gifted child is considered a child who achieves better and greater achievements in the activities he or she engages in, earlier, more, faster, more successfully, better, and differently, compared to his or her peers and other children. Šćepanović and Lazarević (2019) emphasize that the term giftedness is suitable for describing all children and students who have a talent, gift, pronounced ability, general above-average abilities, intellectual giftedness, above-average academic success, or more of the above at the same time, regardless of the field in which they occur.

What does it actually mean for a child to be gifted? No single definition of giftedness provides a universal answer to this question, but many share certain common core characteristics. For example, some definitions refer to the uneven development observed in gifted children. Such is the Columbus Group (1991):

“Giftedness is uneven development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This unevenness in development increases with greater intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted makes them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling for them to develop optimally.”

Just as a student may experience a learning discrepancy (for example, a student who is successful in algebra but is unable to solve basic geometry problems), children who are developing unevenly may experience “gaps” between their intellectual abilities and other abilities and skills. For example, a student may have psychomotor coordination disorders or problems mastering the art of writing, despite their advanced intellectual abilities. It is not uncommon for gifted students to experience frustration and recognize a large gap between their intellectual functioning and their social and emotional behavior. Since uneven development creates such developmental problems, it is crucial to ensure appropriate resources and opportunities to best identify, encourage, and support the specific needs of each gifted child.

Through the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act, which is part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the federal government defined gifted students as “Students, children, or youth who demonstrate evidence of high achievement in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic areas, and who require services and activities not normally provided by the school to develop their full potential.”

In her book *Gifted Children: Myths and Reality* (2005), Ellen Winner defines giftedness with three atypical characteristics:

- Precocious maturity – “They begin to take their first steps in mastering some domains at an earlier age than expected. They also progress much more rapidly in this domain than typical children, because learning in that domain comes easily to them.”
- Insistence on “marching at their own pace” – “Gifted children not only learn faster than average or even bright children, but they also learn in a quantitatively different way.”
- Passion to master – “Gifted children are intrinsically motivated to engage in the domain in which they demonstrate early maturity.” The same author later confirms that in the phenomenon of giftedness, it is also possible to encounter those gifted people who approach everything they encounter with such fervor or enthusiasm (Winner, 2018).

Many states in the United States have their own definitions of giftedness for the purposes of formulating gifted programs and funding. The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) in the United States defines giftedness as follows:

“Gifted individuals are those who demonstrate extraordinary levels of ability (defined as exceptional reasoning and learning abilities) or competence (documented performance or achievement in the top 10% or less) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or a group of sensorimotor skills (e.g., art, dance, sports).”

There are many areas of giftedness that are not necessarily related to intellectual giftedness. The following categories of giftedness are often mentioned by various authors:

1. General intellectual giftedness
2. Specific academic abilities
3. Creative abilities
4. Leadership abilities
5. Visual and performing abilities
6. Psychomotor abilities.

While some define giftedness as high achievement that is revealed by assessing the level of intelligence, it is important to point out that intelligence tests cannot detect and “measure” the potential that young people have in other areas of giftedness. It is true that a high level of intelligence should mean that a person is intellectually gifted, but giftedness in itself does not require high intelligence. The most important thing is that these exceptionally capable individuals are discovered in the educational system and that they are helped to realize their full potential in whatever field it may exist. Gifted students, no matter how they are identified and defined, all have different and specific educational needs compared to their peers; their education should be supported so that they are enabled to develop in a timely manner and fully assert themselves in the areas for which they have potential.

Because of the different definitions used in the field, it is often more effective to use specific descriptions of abilities and descriptions of insights into the child’s capabilities. This can make it easier for others to understand the needs of a gifted child. (Five Definitions of Giftedness, 2012) Regarding the characteristics of gifted individuals, Rocamora testifies, based on many years of experience in counseling and teaching gifted adults, that there is a “strong connection between giftedness and spirituality, that is, an inner search for meaning and connection to something deeper” (Rocamora: What is Awareness and How Can it Optimize The Gifted?). The same author states the importance of raising public awareness of the needs of the gifted, which can be influenced by informative articles and other activities that contribute to bridging the gap between gifted people and other people in their environment (Rocamora: Giftedness Self-Tests Index).

2.1.3. Frequency of Giftedness Occurrence (Prevalence)

“While IQ was considered the only indicator of giftedness, only 3-5% of the population was recorded as gifted, and thus problems with conventional intelligence tests and identification methods led to a large number of gifted people being left out when identifying giftedness” (Maithrey et al., 2013, according to Milanović, 2017, p. 193).

Within Renzulli’s (Renzulli, 2006) “practical system for identifying gifted and talented students”, we observe a very flexible approach of the author, which emphasizes the complexity and importance of the problem of identifying giftedness, both for the gifted person and for society as a whole. Accordingly, the author recommends that 15% of students, regardless of the type of giftedness, be nominated to the group of potentially gifted students, and that this number can change depending on the size of the “core of gifted students” (Božović, 2018, p. 25).

Đorđević (1999) is of a similar opinion, believing that a higher percentage of children (20% from the top of the ranking list) are considered gifted at preschool and early school age, and that this criterion becomes stricter with age (Božović, 2018, p. 26).

A well-known study by Archer and associates (Achter et al., 1996) conducted on 1,000 gifted adolescents reports that only 5% of respondents actually show characteristics of multipotentiality using instruments standardized on that population (Vardo, 2018, p. 255).

2.1.4. Types of Giftedness

Milanović reports that Gardner (Gardner, 2003, according to Al-Makhalid, 2012) lists three types of intelligence: a property of all human beings, a dimension by which human beings differ, the way in which tasks are performed based on goals. There are nine constructs of intelligence and it is believed that an individual can be gifted in each of them: linguistic, musical, spatial, mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, interpersonal, natural and spiritual.

Gifted students, according to Gardner (Gardner, 2006), can show abilities in several areas:

1. General intellectual abilities and talents,
2. Specific academic achievements,
3. Visual and performing arts,
4. Leadership abilities,
5. Creative and productive thinking;
6. Mechanical ingenuity;
7. The ability to empathize, understand, and negotiate (Brown et al., 2005).

Gardner points out that there are five types of minds:

1. “Disciplined mind – the ability (a child’s ability to achieve true mastery in one or more disciplines),
2. A mind that can synthesize, examine, and select information from a mass of information and use it to solve specific problems,
3. Creative mind – the ability to devise new solutions,
4. A respectful mind allows children to understand values and differences,
5. Ethical mind allows children to appreciate, value, and act in accordance with ethical codes” (Macintyre, 2008:6, according to Milanović, 2017, pp. 197 and 198).

“The combination of genetic and environmental factors allows us to see, assess and accept a child with different types of talents. The lack of the last mentioned indicator can be seen with the help of Gardner's division of intelligences (Gardner, 1983) into eight different types: personal, affective, physical, mathematical, musical, emotional, social and literary intelligence” (Macintyre, 2008, according to Milanović, 2017, p. 193).

Modern concepts promote creativity (achievement) as a necessary condition for giftedness (Feldhusen, 1986; Renzulli, 2005; Sternberg & Zhang, 1995; Tannenbaum, 1986), but, it seems

to us, with full right, another group of authors (Mayer, 2005; Robinson, 2005; von Karolyi & Winner, 2005) believes that age-related progress, defined as developmentally faster mastery of a certain domain that is not the product of more intensive training, is a completely sufficient manifestation of giftedness in the developmental period. In line with the above, Altaras's (2006) opinion is that exceptional speed, ease, and originality in mastering a certain domain can certainly be considered valid indicators of giftedness, thus representing the defining characteristics of gifted individuals – children and adults (Božović, 2018, p. 14).

Multi-gifted Students, Multipotentiality

Speaking of multipotentiality as a “specific developmental problem of the gifted,” Vardo (2018, p. 250) emphasizes that in socioemotional development, gifted individuals face certain internal and external developmental specificities, one of which is multipotentiality. The author continues that the term “multipotentiality” originated at the Wisconsin Laboratory for Research and Guidance of Gifted Individuals (Kerr and Sodano, 2003). In the literature on the career guidance of intellectually gifted individuals, multipotent individuals are described as those who achieve equally high scores on aptitude and achievement tests and demonstrate multiple educational and occupational interests with equal intensity (Sanborn, 1979, according to Achteret al., 1996).

We also speak of multipotent students when “everything points to the fact that they demonstrate exceptional abilities in several areas, including intellectual, academic, creative, social or leadership, and psychomotor areas” (George, 2005, according to Adžić, 2011, p. 177) or in some, or two or more, of the listed areas.

Gifted Underachievers

“When it comes to gifted students, it is estimated that 15–40% of them are at serious risk of academic failure or achievement far below their potential (Seeley, 1993, according to Clemons, 2008), and some sources speculate that about 50% of gifted students do not achieve results that would be consistent with their abilities (NCEE, 1984, according to Clemons, 2008; see also Richert, 1991, according to Peters et al., 2000).” (Altaras Dimitrijević et al., 2014, p. 144).

One of the greatest frustrations of parents of gifted children is the assumption that giftedness means success in a traditional school environment. Gifted children are not intrinsically motivated by good grades; they are more passionate about acquiring knowledge than about completing tasks. This creates a problem when the school structure and grades rely on repetition and memorization. While there are many reasons why gifted students fail to succeed, the most common are:

- Mismatch between the student and their classroom environment
- Disinterest in the content
- Poor self-concept
- Fear of failure
- Learning difficulties

- Lack of self-regulation
- Lack of study skills

Whenever possible, it is important to recognize failure early and address it quickly. If a gifted child thinks that learning and school require little or no effort, he may continue to fail academically and may never learn to challenge himself and work to his full potential in reaching higher levels. (Winner, 1996, according to the Institute for Educational Achievement).

“The gap between potential and achievement is a leitmotif that runs through almost all available definitions of underachievement; condensing them into a single conceptual definition, we can say that underachievement represents the occurrence of a discrepancy between ability and achievement, where the available/actual achievement is significantly lower than what would be expected based on insight into one’s ability (or their previous performance on tasks of the same type) (Altaras, 2006; Dowdall & Colangelo, 1982; Reis & McCoach, 2000).” (Altaras Dimitrijević et al., 2014, p. 145).

General Characteristics of Gifted Students

While no two gifted students are identical, research has shown that most gifted students exhibit many common characteristics and behaviors. Of the common characteristics of gifted children listed by the Institute for Educational Achievement, not all may apply to every gifted child:

- Has an extensive and detailed memory, especially in a specific area of interest
- Has an advanced vocabulary for his or her age; uses precocious language
- Has advanced communication skills for his/her age and can express ideas and feelings
- Asks intelligent and complex questions
- Recognizes important features of new concepts and problems
- Learns information quickly
- Uses logic to come up with common sense answers
- Has a broad knowledge base and a large amount of information
- Understands abstract ideas and complex concepts
- Uses analogical thinking, problem solving, or reasoning
- Observes relationships and sees connections
- Finds and solves difficult and unusual problems
- Understands principles, forms generalizations, and uses them in new situations
- Wants to learn and is curious
- Is conscientious and has a high degree of concentration in areas that particularly interest him/her
- Understands and uses various symbol systems
- Reflects on learning
- Is engaged in a specific subject
- Has advanced reading skills for his/her age
- Has advanced abilities writing for their age
- Has strong artistic or musical abilities and experiences

- Concentrates intensely for long periods, especially in a particular area of interest
- Is more aware, stimulated, and influenced by their environment
- Experiences extreme positive or negative feelings
- Experiences strong physical reactions to emotions
- Has strong affective memory, reliving or re-feeling things long after the event.

Overexcitability and Intensities

Gifted people, as already noted, are often more aware of their environment, more stimulated, and influenced by their environment, and therefore experience the world differently. Emotional and physical reactions to events may last longer than expected, and are often relived in the child's mind; these experiences of heightened stimulation that have been observed in many gifted individuals are called intensities or overexcitability.

Intensities can be characterized as:

- Extreme feelings: positive or negative feelings; complex emotions; connection with the feelings of others; strong laughter and tears,
- Physical reaction to the emotion: stomachaches and headaches; flushing; increased body temperature,
- Strong affective memory: re-experiencing or re-feeling things long after the primary event and experience; nightmares; complex daydreams related to real events,
- There are five areas of overexcitability: psychomotor, sensual, imaginative, intellectual, and emotional. (Institute for Educational Achievement)

2.1.5. Characteristics of Gifted Students

As areas in which gifted children demonstrate high performance or potential ability, Marland lists the following:

- General intellectual ability,
- Specific academic abilities,
- Creative or productive thinking,
- Leadership abilities,
- Visual and performing arts, and
- Psychomotor abilities. (Božović, 2018, p. 15)

In general, gifted children have a positive self-image thanks to awards for their achievements. They are popular among their peers. Often these students are socially adaptable, but insufficiently prepared for life's challenges (Brown et al, 2005, according to Milanović, 2017, p. 193).

The characteristics of gifted students (adults and children) are: a positive attitude towards high achievements, creativity, productivity and leadership, enjoyment of challenges, enjoyment of

innovations, inventiveness, possessing a strong tendency to learn, develop and enrich their personality (David, 2011, according to Milanović, 2017, p. 194). Kalin and Valenić Zuljan (Kalin & Valenčić Zuljan, 2004) state that gifted students are curious inquirers with rich ideas and atypical solutions, with rich and diverse knowledge in content and good memory and eloquence, capable of quick cause-and-effect reasoning and precise observation. They are (self) critical evaluators, nonconformists, with a developed desire for completeness, they value content, diversity and unusualness, and they hate routine and monotony (Kadum & Orahovec, 2018, p. 62).

The authors Cvetković Lay and Sekulić Majurec (Cvetković Lay & Sekulić Majurec, 2008, according to Fuček, 2017, p. 6) state that highly developed abilities alone are not sufficient to demonstrate giftedness. Researchers have observed that some gifted individuals also have some specific personality traits. Motivation for work is a personality trait that contributes to the manifestation of giftedness. It is expressed through specific interests in a certain area, great goal-orientation when performing tasks that are the subject of the specific interests of the gifted, and great work energy during activities that satisfy the specific interests of the gifted (Winner, 2005). Through these traits, a gifted child becomes informed about the area that is the subject of his or her specific interests and acquires enviable knowledge about that area. General personality traits that are characteristic of gifted children are: “a positive self-image, self-esteem, setting high goals, lack of fear of criticism, a sense of self-worth and setting high standards for one’s own work” (Čudina-Obradović, 1990, p. 34), and greater independence in work, which is expressed through “autonomy, self-sufficiency, dominance and individualism, self-direction, non-conformity, initiative, willingness to take risks” (ibid., according to Fuček, 2017, p. 6). In addition, gifted people have a specific attitude towards activities within the domain of their gift (Altaras Dimitrijević, 2012), i.e. they are motivated in a special way to practice and improve them. This is a strong intrinsic motivation that Winner (1996, 2000) calls the *rage to master*, conveying the observation that, in addition to truly liking to engage in activities and tasks from a specific domain, gifted individuals tend to make them more complex and challenging on their own initiative; Vandervert (2009) also conveys the same with his observation that gifted individuals spontaneously apply the principles of purposeful practice. (Altaras Dimitrijević & Tatić Janevski, 2016, p. 25)

Discussing the practical aspects of contemporary understandings of giftedness, Božin (Božin, 2008) states that giftedness is a characteristic of a developing individual, so that any comprehensive theory of giftedness is necessarily also a theory of the development of giftedness or, as Gagné (Gagné, 2004) states, of the transformation of gifts into talents. Therefore, any comprehensive theory of giftedness – similar to theories of human development in general – is forced to take a position on some key issues of development, such as: human nature, qualitative or quantitative development, inheritance, the influence of the environment on development, etc. (Kadum & Orahovec, 2018, p. 63).

This is why Winner (1996) emphasizes that a gifted child is one who is born with an unusual ability to master a certain area (or areas) and, by the term giftedness, understands three characteristic and atypical features that gifted children possess in relation to other children:

(1) Precocious development – Gifted children develop ahead of their time. They take their first steps in mastering an area earlier than usual. Likewise, they progress faster in that area than average children because they learn easily in it.

(2) Insistence on “playing it their own way” – Gifted children have different learning paths, and in terms of quality, their achievements are higher and of higher quality. They “play their own game” and require minimal help from adults because they mostly learn independently, creating rules within the activity itself and discovering new, unusual ways of solving problems.

(3) Passion for mastery – Gifted children are highly motivated, with an obsessive interest in understanding the meaning of the area in which they show signs of precocious development. Absorbed in learning in the area in which they express activity, they experience optimal states in which they become completely immersed in the problem and lose all sense of the outside world (Kadum & Orahovec, 2018, p. 63).

Altaras Dimitrijević and Tatić Janevski (2016, p. 26) emphasize that “...although we can say that certain socio-affective characteristics, or personality traits, are more frequently or strongly expressed in the gifted population, we cannot expect that every individual gifted person will exhibit them.”

In addition to the negative characteristics of the personality profile of gifted underachievers, such as deficiencies or problems in the affective-motivational sphere of personality, which can be considered factors of underachievement,

“it should be noted that underachievement of gifted students is associated with certain specificities in terms of learning style and content, which include a tendency towards holistic information processing (Redding, 1990) and a more pronounced orientation towards social-humanistic and artistic domains (Colangelo et al., 1993) in comparison to the choice of technical (engineering) and medical sciences, which is characteristic of successful gifted students. (Colangelo et al., 1993 according to Altaras Dimitrijević et al., 2014, p. 151)

That multipotentiality of interests is a recognized characteristic of the gifted is emphasized by Sanborn (1974), Herr (1976), Milgram (1989), Rysiew et al. (1999), Frederickson and Rothney, (1972) and Sanborn (1979, according to Kerr and Sodano, 2003), pointing out that gifted students have consistently high scores across various ability and achievement tests, showing patterns of high achievement in school, where they are regularly involved in various social, sports, and community activities, and claiming that most gifted people can be viewed as multidimensional or multipotential and that most researchers reliably claim that gifted individuals, in addition to high achievement on ability tests and excellent grades, also express multiple, unified professional interests (Vardo, 2018, p. 255). Vardo (ibidem, p. 251) also points out that, despite the contradictory findings of different authors, the fact remains that multipotentiality in gifted individuals is a unique need of gifted individuals and the most common obstacle to their correct career choice (Colangelo & Assouline, 2000).

“Compared to other students, gifted students score significantly lower on two factors of the Alexithymia Scale, meaning that they are more emotionally oriented than their average peers (emotional orientation, $d=-0.36$) and more willing to recognize them (emotional identification,

d=−0.29). In addition, gifted students score higher on some aspects of the basic dimension of openness to experience, namely on the facet that speaks of breadth of interests and intellectual curiosity (ideas, d=0.55) and on the facet that concerns the willingness to question social, political, and religious values (values, d=0.42). Also, gifted students strive less to be surrounded by other people (sociability, d=−0.34) and show relatively less sympathy and concern for them (gentleness, d=−0.22) than their average peers.” the rest of the high school population. Finally, the results indicate that gifted students have a better calibrated self-assessment of their achievement on an intelligence test (self-evaluation, d=−0.42).

In short, although they show a lower degree of interest in other people and their needs, gifted students are more focused on emotions and tend to deal with them than average students; in addition to superior cognitive abilities, gifted students are also characterized by better developed metacognitive skills and greater openness to new/different values and ideas. (Altaras Dimitrijević et al., 2014, pp. 158-159).

“Due to the often inappropriate curricula and content that is covered and which causes boredom and disinterest in them, they may be inattentive or disturb other students with their activities, therefore they sometimes show the qualities that are least expected of them: resistance to working in groups or pairs, superficiality, non-acceptance of failure, and they are often not liked in class, especially if they have the habit of emphasizing their intellectual superiority. “ (Adžić, 2011, p. 173).

2.1.6. Educational Practice: What Else Do We (Don't) Know About Giftedness? – Questions and Dilemmas

“Important, conceptual, and practical questions to consider and discuss when it comes to giftedness are:

1. Intelligence and its contribution to potential giftedness?
2. Are gifted children labeled?
3. What are the differences between gifted and talented children?
4. Is giftedness hereditary?
5. Is there a gene for genius or is it conditioned by the quality of the social environment?
6. Are the brains of gifted and talented people different?
7. What types of teaching and activities are challenging for gifted children?
8. Do gifted people have learning difficulties?” (Macintyre, 2008: 3, according to Milanović, 2017, p. 192).

Myths About Giftedness

Some of the myths about giftedness are more widely known and popular, such as the nine myths by Ellen Winer (Winner, 2005) or the Rocamora myths, of which we will mention two:

The gifted can do everything themselves - they do not need extra attention, neither as children nor as adults.

The path to achievement for the gifted is strewn with landmines. (Rocamora, Myths About Giftedness)

The myths about giftedness have been written about on several occasions, but one of the most detailed and therefore most useful descriptions of the myths was given in 2009 in a special, thematic issue of the journal *Gifted Child Quarterly*; the issue was dedicated to the myths about giftedness. The issue was edited by guest editor Professor Treffinger, who emphasized that the goal of this special issue was to “demythologize” or help free oneself from the above myths about giftedness, to encourage discussion, critical thinking, creative research, and to provide guidelines for the further development of theory and practice working with gifted children (Treffinger, 2009, p. 229).

We present all 19 myths given in the above edition, as useful advice and explanations that can clarify many dilemmas, inspire thinking and move to action.

Myth 1: The gifted and talented form a single homogeneous group and giftedness is a way of being that remains in a person over time and experience (Reis, & Renzulli, 2009, p. 233).

The authors even point out that, according to research results, there is no more diverse group of youth and adolescents than the gifted (Neihart et al., 2002, p. 1, according to Reis, & Renzulli, 2009, p. 233) and they differ greatly in: abilities and dispositions, achievements, academic background, culture and identity, efforts and motivation, and interests, learning styles and creative possibilities (Reis, & Renzulli, 2009, p. 234). The same authors state that giftedness is not a fixed state that only a select few have throughout their lives. “Rather, it is developmental – emerging in some children and adults with high potential, at certain times, under certain circumstances, and with appropriate levels of support, time, effort and personal investment and choice” (ibidem, p. 235).

Myth 2: Gifted people make up 3% to 5% of the population. Moreover, giftedness is equal to a high IQ, which is a stable measure of ability (Borland, 2009, p. 236).

The author explains that giftedness, with its diversity, goes beyond the small percentages in which it is placed by those who mistakenly equate giftedness with high intelligence. It is important to highlight all the different forms of existing giftedness, especially by showing employees in educational institutions what giftedness is, in order to get out of the framework of understanding its prevalence in low percentages or in a small number of children and students.

Myth 3: The family of identification myths (Callahan, 2009, p. 239)

Author Callahan explains several myths related to the identification of gifted children and students, stating that these myths are, for example, The sample must be the same as the population, There is a “silver bullet” in identification that eliminates social and economic

inequalities, or There must be “winners” and “losers” in recognizing and programming the gifted. The truth is that there is a need for standardized ways to assess the abilities of gifted children and students in all domains, and not just within narrow samples of the population, such as the highly intelligent. Also, if gifted are labeled as such - gifted, the question is whether this means that all other students are some kind of “losers” and the importance of assigning a name is emphasized; in addition, it is problematic to place discovered giftedness in verbally based school programs that are not appropriate for all emerging forms of giftedness.

Myth 4: One test score or indicator tells us everything we need to know about giftedness (Warrell, 2009, p. 242).

This myth was discussed long ago by Treffinger (1982) as a fallacy in identifying giftedness based on only one result. Research clearly shows that exceptional achievements of children and adults are multivariate in nature and therefore require multivariate explanations (Warrell, 2009, p. 243). Because, the term “gifted” includes, without a clear consensus, both the intellectually gifted and those who have outstanding performance in all other areas, academic and non-academic – which is actually unacceptable and will have to be resolved in the future – the same author believes.

Myth 5: It is too difficult to measure creativity (Treffinger, 2009, p. 245).

Viewing creativity as the “most exciting dimension of mental functioning” (Khatena, 1982, according to Treffinger, 2009, p. 245), Khatena builds creativity on three dimensions - the individual, the environment and the cosmos or “suprarational” dimensions, and describes a hierarchy of creative levels from the fundamental, rational to the highest/esoteric level of creative genius. Creativity described and structured in this way is also highlighted by the author himself as measurable. There are newer concepts of assessing creativity that are based on assessing the creative potential of a person across multiple domains. This approach has been established so far for two domains, but assessments of potential creativity in other domains are also rapidly developing. Therefore, it is not justified to claim that it is impossible or difficult to measure, or rather, assess creativity.

Myth 6: Cosmetic use of multiple criteria for nominating the gifted (Friedman-Nimz, 2009, p. 248).

Why is the necessity of multiple criteria for nominating the gifted emphasized, is a question that the author answers by explaining the lack of application of multiple criteria in policies and practices, even though they have been shown and proven to be necessary and justified in empirical studies. Why waste valuable time collecting data that is not taken into account? The pressure on these facts related to the identification of the gifted comes from several directions, most notably from the direction of misunderstanding the phenomenon of giftedness and from the desire to minimize the issue of the existence and education of the gifted in order to focus general education entirely on those who are not gifted, but nevertheless are a significant majority. Also, if multiple criteria were used for nomination, there could be an (unwanted) “epidemic” of giftedness, which would certainly require changes in the education system;

changes are not always well accepted by participants in the educational process, as our experience shows that changes are introduced into the system without adequate preparation of the environment and all participants.

Myth 7: Differentiation in the regular classroom is equivalent to gifted programs and is sufficient (Classroom teachers have enough time, skills, and will to implement adequate differentiation) (Hertberg-Davis, 2009, p. 251).

The myth refers to the misconception that differentiation as a procedure and approach can be the only tool used in working with gifted students. On the contrary, differentiation is a useful approach that should be one of the measures to support the education of gifted students within the framework of the educational process, regular or in separate conditions, but by no means the only measure or the only approach.

Myth 8: The “patchwork” approach to programming is effective (Tomlinson, 2009, p. 254).

“Patchwork” should represent temporary measures that can eliminate some kind of “breakdown” and this approach has probably never been chosen as the best by educators working with gifted children. However, the “patchwork” approach is quite common and reflects the shortcomings of the systemic approach to gifted education; it is the “gluing” and implementation of individual procedures, tasks and activities that are not designed to meet the needs of the gifted student as a whole. This type of programming results in one of the following: The program is not really an appropriate program; The program has largely or completely different goals from regular goals; There is a discrepancy between what is taught, how it is taught, and who teaches it; Communication between the program for gifted students and other elements of the school program is weak or absent; Program content resembles a patchwork quilt; Program content changes with the teacher; A program is “effective” if the student likes it. The author suggests questions that need to be answered when creating programs so that they are also effective for gifted students.

Myth 9: There is a one-size-fits-all program for gifted students (Kaplan, 2009, p. 257).

The author discusses the importance of the question “How does the differentiated curriculum designed or selected for our gifted students meet their needs, interests, and abilities?” Answers to this question help gifted educators understand that moving from a general or regular curriculum developed for all students to a differentiated curriculum for gifted students is only a partial step on the path to aligning the curriculum with giftedness. The next step in curriculum is to individualize the differentiated curriculum so that it becomes appropriate for each gifted student (Kaplan, 2009, p. 258).

Myth 10: Ostrich Testing: Individualized Services for the Gifted Do Not Cure Ailing Regular Programs (Robinson, 2009, p. 259).

The author explains that this myth refers to ostrich-like behavior, where institutions or others bury their heads in the sand with a recognizable but limited program while ignoring a larger problem such as an inadequate overall school environment for gifted students. Gifted students

need to be provided with a total supportive environment, not just a single, universal, “cure” program that will of course not meet all their educational needs.

Myth 11: A Comprehensive Continuum of Gifted Education and Talent Development Services (Discovering, Developing, and Enhancing the Gifts and Talents of Youth) (Gentry, 2009, p. 262).

The myth refers to the all-encompassing program needed by the gifted, which refers to a comprehensive set of responsive services that span grade levels and subject areas, providing a variety of well-designed opportunities for diverse students who have potential talent in many different domains - such a program would be sufficient and could serve as an example for others. Partially planned activities (development of abilities and skills) are not comprehensive programs. The author provides an overview of comprehensive continuum services for gifted education and talent development, based on the expanded and enriched continuum of services presented by Renzulli (Renzulli, 1994, in Gentry, 2009). In order to recognize whether talent exists, there must be opportunities for talent to emerge. A child needs access to skates, ice, and high-quality instruction, along with time, to develop talent and a passion for hockey. Otherwise, we will never know whether he or she could be the next great hockey player, no matter how sophisticated the measurement of skating ability is and no matter how comprehensive the assessment of a child’s knowledge or ability (Gentry, 2009, p. 265).

Myth 12: Gifted programs should stick out (like a sore thumb) (VanTassel-Baska, 2009, p. 266). Dangerous misconceptions in our current school environments need to be confronted: (a) the fallacy that no child goes unrecognized if gifted, (b) the wrong age and circumstances for talent development, and (c) the fallacy of a single teaching system and time frame for gifted learning. The myth of separatism must be exposed in all its dangerous aspects, so that the countermeasure is not made worse—for example, solving the problems of giftedness by placing them in regular classrooms without trained teachers or adapted materials or groupings. The real countermeasure to separatism for the gifted lies not in inclusion, as it is currently interpreted, but in the flexibility of accommodations and learning opportunities that can be accessed based on documented knowledge of gifted students (VanTassel-Baska, 2009, p. 268).

Myth 13: Teachers can do it themselves (Sisk, 2009, p. 269).

The related myths that teachers can successfully teach gifted students themselves and that they can do so through differentiation are still alive and well.

Kaplan states that differentiation includes:

“Who – the student and his or her needs, interests, and abilities; what – the content and skills of the subject to be taught; how – the pedagogy used to teach the content, skills, or both; and where – the circumstances, grouping, or both necessary to effectively deliver the curriculum (what) to the student.” (Kaplan, 2009, according to Sisk, 2009, p. 269)

One solution to the problem posed by this myth is to reconsider the idea of introducing a gifted specialist who could work collaboratively with the regular classroom teacher to assess the gifted

student's interests, learning preferences, and skill level, and then help him or her plan and develop lessons with appropriate depth and complexity (Sisk, 2009, p. 271).

Myth 14: Waiting for Santa Claus (Adams, 2009, p. 272).

The myth primarily refers to educational institutions that, in terms of gifted education, behave as if they were waiting for Santa Claus, that is, as if they were waiting for some being outside the institution to come and in one fell swoop establish all the necessary conditions for gifted education. It is true that each institution needs to take measures and establish support to the extent that circumstances allow, but the initiative must exist and will certainly be useful. The same applies to a part of researchers, who deal only with issues of gifted education for whose research there are stable sources of funding, without the initiative towards research on equally important but materially unsupported topics.

Myth 15: Students with exceptional abilities do not face problems and challenges (Moon, 2009, p. 274).

The root of this myth is in the insufficient information of employees in the education system about the needs and abilities of gifted students. If gifted students are placed in an educational environment that is too low or too average, they are likely to experience boredom, frustration, and loss of motivation (Robinson, et al., 2002, according to Moon, 2009, p. 274). Such problems are reflected in the further (non)progress of gifted students because it is difficult to engage in developmental projects if there are no academic challenges and the required efforts are below the student's abilities. In a well-adapted environment, the challenges and problems that arise for gifted students will be less frequent or will appear in a milder form.

Myth 16: Tests are synonymous with rigor and difficulty (Moon, 2009, p. 277).

In this myth, the author discusses the harmfulness of knowledge tests that measure responsibility for education, i.e. the achievements of students, schools and regions, as opposed to (pre)assessments that are conducted in classrooms, in accordance with the achievements of each individual student. Testing requires that students in classrooms prepare and learn how to achieve high test results, and not how to think, discover and recognize the phenomena that surround us. Gifted students suffer the most from the aforementioned approach. The author believes that it is possible to adapt and conduct tests so that they are not demotivating for all participants in the educational process.

Myth 17: Gifted and talented individuals do not have unique social and emotional needs (Peterson, 2009, p. 280).

Empirical and clinical studies have proven that gifted students have unique social and emotional needs. Because of this myth, action is missed at key moments when gifted students need special additional support. Teaching staff must be prepared and able to recognize the emergence of hints of this type of problem in gifted students, because the lack of support can make gifted students more vulnerable (Peterson, 2009, p. 282).

Myth 18: It is fair to teach all children the same way (Cooper, 2009, p. 283).

The author discusses whether fairness is equal to equality and whether all participants in the educational process are aware that education is necessary to meet the needs of each student as an individual. If teaching all children the same way is not fair or just, what is the alternative? Education should aim to raise each student to his or her maximum potential—and to do so in an atmosphere of genuine respect, integrity, trust, and compassion that teachers must use to connect with each student individually (Cooper, 2009, p. 284).

Myth 19: Are advanced courses adequate for gifted students? (Gallagher, 2009, p. 286)

Advanced courses have become indispensable for gifted students as advanced courses in many fields have become one of the primary criteria for admission to American colleges. Many students choose to take these advanced programs and take advanced tests to provide additional college admissions points. Advanced courses are now an integral part of high school education. These courses are not designed for gifted students per se; These are programs designed as traditional college courses rather than as examples of best practices in gifted education. In addition to their good qualities, in order for Advanced Courses to be adequate for gifted students, they should be held to the existing standards that apply to other gifted programs. Advanced courses could be adequate if they combine a fast pace with advanced instruction and as one of several advanced courses of the gifted student's choice. Thus, teachers and administrators have the final answer to the question of what kind of advanced course will be intended for gifted students, because current advanced courses are not adequate for them (Gallagher, 2009, p. 287).

How to Support the Multi-Talented?

“Appreciating multi-talentedness as a life path comes in three steps: recognition, management, and governance... Why is it important to recognize all your talents if you are multi-talented? At the beginning of self-actualization, some people feel anxious or depressed because they do not recognize, much less address, the talents within themselves. Some simply feel scattered and unfocused because they cannot find an obvious synthesis for so many interests and abilities. To see the bigger picture, it is helpful to put all of one's interests and abilities on the table and embrace them with the curiosity that is natural to a free state of consciousness. Then one can explore what all of these sometimes seemingly disparate abilities have to offer.” (Rokamora, Challenges of being Multi-talented)

In general, our culture does not encourage the gifted to lead lives that are in line with their inner creative or visionary drives. Instead, they are expected to focus on life and be “gifted in their own time.” Conventional living is grudgingly embraced, and creativity is sacrificed on the altar of adult responsibility. This is how many gifted young people disappear into the mainstream, primarily out of economic necessity. In addition, those who have never been identified or reflected upon growing up seem to find launching into a creative profession too daunting and financially unsustainable. (Ibidem)

2.2. DETECTION AND RECOGNITION OF GIFTED CHILDREN AND STUDENTS

2.2.1. The Importance of Early Detection and Recognition of Gifted Students

Among researchers of gifted, talented, and creative, it is well known that gifted individuals exhibit greater intensity and heightened levels of emotional, imaginative, intellectual, sensual, and psychomotor excitability and that this is a normal pattern of development. This is because these gifted children and adults have a finely tuned psychological structure and an organized awareness that they experience their entire lives differently and more intensely than those around them.

These traits, however, are often perceived by psychotherapists and others as evidence of mental disorder because most of the population lacks accurate information about the special characteristics of gifted individuals, couples, and families. Most people are unaware that what is considered gifted is most often labeled as neurosis in the general population and as a result, gifted individuals are personally and emotionally vulnerable to a variety of unique difficulties in relationships at home, work, school, and in the community. (Azpeitia & Rocamora, 1994)

Modern preschool pedagogy, as a scientific discipline in the system of pedagogical sciences, has been increasingly expanding the field of interest in the problems of the possibility of early identification of giftedness since the beginning of the second half of the 20th century; most researchers emphasize the fact that, if children are not identified early, it may happen that such children are not encouraged in an appropriate and stimulating way and therefore their level of giftedness does not reach its point of development (Karnes & Johnson, 1990, according to Gojkov et al., 2002). Therefore, the main goal of any identification process is to provide appropriate educational experiences in order to improve the continuous development of each child. From an educational perspective, if we respect the principle that all individuals should be given the opportunity to develop their potential, identification is an essential issue (Monks & Katzko, 2005, according to Božović, 2018, p. 22).

“It also matters when one begins to practice. Precisely because the path to expertise is long and thorny, and competitive fields tend to close their doors to those who have “outgrown” a certain level of training or type of participation, systematic work on building expertise should begin relatively early” (Ziegler, 2008, according to Altaras Dimitrijević & Tatić Janevski, 2016, p. 23). “Finally, although failing in some cases can be understood as an “honorable choice”, it is difficult to believe that we can treat it as a free choice of the student; rather, in our opinion, one could say that the (authentic) student is forced to fail (Altaras, 2006) when the school puts him or her in an unfair dilemma: to be or to achieve?” (Altaras Dimitrijević, et al., 2014, p. 148)

“Due to the negativities that arise during the teaching process, it is certainly very important to detect such gifted children, approach them individually with programs tailored to their needs, and first of all, to train teachers and professional associates to work with such children, without neglecting parents and the wider social community, which, due to ignorance and misunderstanding, often stigmatizes gifted children and their families” (Adžić, 2011, p. 173).

Recognition as a way of discovering gifted individuals is most often associated with parents, educators, teachers, peers and others who come into contact with gifted individuals. Parents have the opportunity to recognize their children in various everyday situations. Therefore, until they start school (or preschool), they are the most important source of information about a child's potential giftedness (Božović, 2018, p. 24).

The detection of giftedness, especially in children, is of utmost importance in order to provide them with comprehensive support and assistance in every respect. The identification of certain individuals as gifted or the determination of their giftedness is one of the important prerequisites for any action in this area. An organized and systematic influence on the development of the potential of gifted children is not possible without knowing the type and degree of giftedness of the gifted individual (Božović, 2018, p. 23).

Many studies that have dealt with the identification of giftedness, and in which parents were also involved, indicate that parents of a gifted child need precise information regarding the characteristics that distinguish a gifted individual from their peers (Đorđević, 2005). Also, research conducted by Sturza-Milić (2009) showed that parents are not competent enough to recognize the potential motor talent of children, so the author, taking into account the significant role of the family in the process of discovering and encouraging talent, recommends additional education for parents (Božović, 2018, 24).

2.2.2. Gifted Child and Family

Winner (2005) lists six general principles of an optimal family climate for raising gifted children:

1. The gifted child is often the only or firstborn child, and therefore occupies a special position in the family.
2. The gifted child grows up in an environment that is rich in stimuli, interesting, and varied.
3. Families of gifted children are focused on the gifted child. Parents direct all their energy to the child so that he or she receives sufficient stimulation and practice in his or her area of giftedness.
4. Parents are role models who set high internal standards and have high expectations for achievement in the child's area of giftedness.
5. Parents encourage and reward the child's independence.
6. The family climate is the most productive for the development of a child's giftedness, it provides incentives, sets high expectations and cares for and supports the child.

"... I have observed many unusual children. Most gifted children have one domain in which they excel. The domains in which such children most often find themselves are language (speaking in sentences at a very early age), music (playing an instrument), drawing (usually very realistic), mathematics and chess. These children show what I call a "zeal to master", the domain in which they are strong. They spend hours working on developing their craft, and

parents often have difficulty separating their child to eat, go to school or sleep. These children have an enormous amount of energy that they focus exclusively (or at least primarily) on the domain of strength. (Winner, 2018)

2.2.3. Methods of Identifying Gifted Students

Schools can aim for a gifted identification system that offers a comprehensive, fair system, and should keep the following six principles in mind:

Advocacy - is it in the best interest of students?

Defense - is it based on the best research and recommendations?

Equity - does it provide equal opportunities for every student, including those who are out of school?

Pluralism - does it use the broadest definition of giftedness?

Inclusivity - does it serve many gifted and talented students, not just the academically gifted?

Pragmatism - does it allow for modification and the use of accessible resources. (Gifted and Talented Pupils, 2007)

Despite their experience working with children of varying abilities and other personality traits and the ability to compare children, educators and educational workers have been shown to be, in general, less successful in their assessments of giftedness than parents (Robinson, 1993). The most common reasons for failures in the process of recognizing giftedness are the high and strict criteria of educators and teachers, as well as the fact that they are more concerned with the academic success of students than they are with assessing their abilities themselves (Božović, 2018, p. 24).

One of the problems related to the identification of giftedness is the fact that teachers most often associate giftedness with intellect, while cultural (music, fine arts), motor (sports, practical work), volitional-moral, and sociable giftedness are not perceived (Avramović & Vujačić, 2009, according to Božović, 2018, p. 24).

An important piece of information is related to the research he conducted (Rocher, 1995, according to Sturza-Milić, 2009) where it turned out that teachers find it more difficult to identify gifted students at a younger age compared to older students. This tendency, the author believes, is not surprising because at older ages it is easier for teachers to assess giftedness, primarily based on specific achievements, unlike at younger ages when they need to assess potential abilities that are still in development (Božović, 2018, p. 25)

Maksić (1994) emphasizes that there is no doubt that discovering, testing and determining giftedness is necessary and desirable, but it requires extreme caution when making a diagnosis (whether a particular child is gifted or not) and a prognosis (about the future development of the examined child). As a necessary measure to improve the accuracy of identification, the same

author recommends more testing over a longer period of time (Maksić, 1999, according to Božović, 2018, p. 26).

When it comes to identifying creative manifestations in the function of development, especially at younger ages, Maksić (1999) recommends identification through supporting the child's interests. Gagne (1993) also speaks about the positive impact of interests on the development of giftedness and talent, considering them "catalysts" of gifted behavior (Božović, 2018, p. 29). Interest in a phenomenon, object, activity or occupation is a regular companion of human life. Pantić (1980) states that interests are:

- An important structural element of personality;
- A universal phenomenon;
- One of the indicators of personality development and maturity;
- Relatively permanent dispositions and
- Indicators of personality capacity.

The same author defines interests as "...a form of (mostly terminal) values characterized by preoccupation with favorite content and/or engagement in selected activities" (Pantić, 1980, p. 29, according to Božović, 2018, p. 30).

By analyzing the aforementioned research dealing with the problem of the relationship between students' interests and gifted behavior, it can be seen that the importance of interests for recognizing different forms of gifted behavior is emphasized, but also the need to examine this issue more precisely, especially in younger ages (*ibidem*).

When dealing with identification, the authors state that based on the results of their research, they learned that teachers, even trained ones, mostly perform "free identification", that is, without using special methods and procedures.

Teachers do not even use any tests, nor do they use parents' opinions about students' interests, successes, and behavior outside of school. How important this is for the development of independence and motivation for learning, was shown by the study we have already discussed (Karnes & Stephens, 2009). This means that those students who do not stand out, do not show the expected behavior or do not have the expected school success, and may be potentially gifted in mathematics, will not be identified as such by the teacher, but will probably ignore them, which is a very common case, and we consider it a big problem. (Marinković & Đokić, 2016, p. 44)

Cvetković Laj and Sekulić Majurec (Cvetkovic Lay & Sekulic Majurec, 2008, according to Fuček, 2017, p. 16), point out that when detecting giftedness in children, errors may occur that are a consequence of overestimating or underestimating some of the characteristics of the gifted.

2.2.4. Educational Practice: Subjective and Objective Procedures and Instruments for Identification and Assessment of Giftedness

Initial identification is undertaken with the aim of forming school groups of gifted students. Students who are identified in this way need additional support in their own school.

The basic methods and ways of identifying gifted students include subjective and objective procedures and instruments for identifying and assessing giftedness.

The most commonly used procedures and instruments are:

1. Observation

The belief that a student may be gifted and talented can come from a number of different sources and can appear at different stages of his development:

- parents may notice that their child is developing skills more quickly compared to students of a similar age;
- rapid development in early childhood may be noticed and recorded during developmental examinations by health personnel;
- friends may draw attention to the child's early speech development, physical development and/or his use of a wide vocabulary;
- teachers at one level may find that a newly enrolled student is capable of performing tasks far beyond the usual expectations for a similar age group; and
- teachers at other levels and in some specific subjects may notice that challenging tasks are performed with ease, along with a demand for further challenges, which, if not met, quickly causes boredom in the student.

An important aspect of observing all these possible, and other, changes is to record observations or record them in some form of documentation (notes, recordings, sample tasks, etc.).

2. Nomination by Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians know their children and can be a very useful source of information in identifying gifted and talented students. Parents/guardians, however, may feel intimidated when claiming that their son/daughter is gifted and talented for fear that others will identify them as the parent/guardian who “thinks they have a genius.” Parents/guardians, by observing their child from an early age, usually notice ability long before the child starts school. Parents/guardians can provide valuable insight into their son/daughter’s strengths and responses to learning needs and should be counseled so that adequate support for gifted students in school can be transferred to their work at home. Parents/guardians can also create a portfolio of their child’s achievements outside of school. Schools will also find it useful to send questionnaires to parents/guardians of students who are in the process of being identified or have already been identified as gifted and talented at the school level.

3. Peer Nomination

One form of identification that is often overlooked is peer nomination. Students in the classroom are very good at nominating gifted and talented students among themselves. One example of a peer nomination exercise takes the form of a game. Students are asked to imagine that they are stranded on a desert island and must nominate one of them who would be the best organizer (leader, persuader), the best judge (resolves arguments, is fair), the fixer (improves things), the inventor (invents, discovers), the entertainer, etc. Teachers may need to take care to guide students in the necessary criteria. There are also peer checklists that ask students questions such as: Which of your classmates would you delegate to best explain to aliens how life on Earth works, etc.

4. Self-Nomination

This can be used with older students who are often more self-aware and aware of their abilities than younger students. Any self-nomination should be investigated and verified, as it is important to keep in mind that in some cases, insufficient academic achievements may mask the manifestation of other abilities whose existence only the gifted students themselves may be aware of.

Very useful tools for self-assessment are also tests, such as those created by Mary Rocamora and which can be found on the Rocamora School website, and offered to students for self-assessment.

5. Nomination by Others

It is important to include as many people as possible in the process of identifying gifted students who could testify to the student's abilities. This includes establishing contacts through meetings and writing letters to organizations that work with groups of students from the school. For example, the following may provide valuable insights:

- scout groups;
- local sports clubs/teams;
- drama or music groups;
- after-school clubs;
- daycare centers; and
- youth clubs, etc.

This information can then be recorded in school registration systems.

6. Teacher Nomination

Teachers may become aware of the presence of gifted and talented students in their classrooms through their performance on tests or exams, but also in many other ways. Teachers may become aware of a student's unusual approach to a problem or the actions of a student who shows tendencies or behavior outside the norms expected for his or her age in any given subject. Careful observation is recommended to determine the need for further study of the child's abilities.

There are several ways in which teachers can conduct structured observation. Teachers should be sufficiently informed and familiar with the methods of selecting appropriate aids for recording observations in relation to the age of the students and the circumstances of the observation. Initial observations, especially with young children, can be made using the “Nebraska Starry Night” template (Eyre, 1997), which is available to all. Another alternative is the General Checklist for Recognizing Gifted and Talented Students, which we present below:

- possesses general knowledge, often knows more than the teacher and finds the usual reference books superficial,
- shows good insight into cause-and-effect relationships,
- grasps basic principles easily and needs a minimum of explanation,
- makes generalizations quickly and extracts relevant points from complex materials,
- has mental speeds faster than physical abilities and is therefore often reluctant to write extensively,
- prefers to talk rather than write and often speaks quickly, fluently and well-expressed,
- is reluctant to engage in skills that have already been mastered, considering such actions useless,
- has an extraordinary curiosity and constantly wants to dream: why...,
- is inventive and original when interested,
- asks questions that require explanations unlike other students,
- often sees unusual and unusual relationships,
- is able to pose problems and easily solves them,
- shows intellectual playfulness, fantasizes and imagines,
- quickly sees connections and manipulates ideas,
- reads quickly and remembers what he reads and can recall numerous details for a long time,
- listens only to part of the explanation and although he seems to lack concentration or even interest, he always knows what is happening,
- jumps into learning stages and is often frustrated by having to fill in the missed stages,
- easily goes from concrete examples to abstract rules and general principles,
- absorbs and recalls information quickly, does not seem to need checks and is patient with repetition,
- is a sharp and good observer, notes details and quickly notices similarities and differences,
- sees greater significance in a story or film than others and easily continues the story,
- quickly spots problems and takes the initiative,
- has advanced understanding and use of language, but sometimes hesitates when asked to use the correct word,
- commits to a task for a longer period of time when interested and may be impatient with distractions or sudden changes in the environment,
- persists in doing an activity when motivated,
- often sets very high personal standards – is a perfectionist,
- is more than usual interested in “adult” problems, such as important issues in current situations (local and global), evolution, justice, the universe, etc.,

- is concerned with adapting and improving institutions, objects, systems (e.g. may be particularly critical of school),
- considers everyday problems and common-sense issues philosophically,
- is sensitive in discussions about the motives, needs and problems of weaker people,
- daydreams and seems occasionally lost in another world,
- shows sensitivity and reacts strongly to things that cause trouble or injustice,
- often takes the lead,
- sympathizes with others and is understanding and empathetic,
- is confident and competent,
- expresses his feelings by attributing ideas to others,
- gives inventive answers to open questions,
- has a sharp sense of humour and is quick to pick up on nuances and hidden meanings,
- likes puns, cartoons, jokes and often enjoys bizarre humour, satire and irony,
- criticizes, even if sometimes with reason,
- does not want to accept authoritarian statements without criticism,
- questions and wants discussion and finding reasons to justify why something is and why it is so.

7. Subject-Specific Checklists

While general checklists examine giftedness in general, there are special checklists or checklists that reveal specific abilities of students, especially of older age, in certain domains, school subjects or in certain types of intelligence and special abilities: mathematics, language, science, information technology, art, geography, history, foreign languages, physical education, music, religious education, design and technology, personal development, drama.

8. School Identification Processes

It is necessary for each school to establish and develop a coherent, reliable and well-known process of recognizing and identifying gifted students, which will start from the earliest age of the students. It is necessary to include all participants in school life in the process, and the process itself should be implemented throughout all school activities.

Such a structured process for detecting and identifying gifted students at the school level should be based on:

- Agreed principles and identification methods to be used in the school.
- An established system for recording and monitoring the school community: the School Register.
- The school provides continuous professional development for all employees to support all developmental and inclusive processes.
- A range of methods are used for the broad identification of gifted and talented students in all areas of learning within and outside the school.
- The population of the School Register should include the school's gifted group.
- The needs of the gifted group are recognized and opportunities for meeting them are developed, both in and outside the classroom.

- Student results are analyzed using school data.
- Existing support measures are assessed and barriers that lead to the underachievement of gifted students are identified.
- Strategies for overcoming obstacles are identified, further action steps are planned, and resources are allocated.
- The identification method and system are evaluated and any necessary adjustments and changes are planned.

2.3. CONDITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION OF GIFTED STUDENTS

2.3.1. Regulations Governing Educational Work With the Gifted

The Council of Europe Recommendations state that “although for practical purposes education systems must be established in such a way as to provide adequate education for the majority of children, there will always be children with special needs for whom special arrangements must be made. One group of such children is the highly gifted.” (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 1994, recommendation 2).

In order to create the special prerequisites that education should provide for gifted students, it was necessary to create and prescribe methods and conditions for working with gifted children, as well as measures to support the education of gifted children and students, and this came about relatively late in the world, in the second half of the twentieth century. “Gifted education and the definition of giftedness as the ability to perform high in the area of general mental abilities, special talents in certain academic areas, creativity, productive thinking, leadership skills, motor skills, began in 1972 in the USA (Marland, 1972, according to Daglioglu & Suveren, 2013, all according to Milanović, 2017, p. 193).

In our circumstances, there are no special strategies for working with gifted students in the state education system, but only extracurricular activities and supplementary content for working with potentially gifted students (Marinković & Đokić, 2016, p. 42). Our students often achieve average results, sometimes even below average, in international tests (OECD, 2014; Mullis et al., 2012, according to *ibid.*, p. 42).

2.3.2. Forms of Support for the Work of Teachers and Professional Associates With Gifted Students

“Only 20% of Serbian teachers believe that their profession is valued in society (compared to 31%, the average for TALIS¹ countries). Teachers with more work experience are more likely to disagree with this view” (OECD, 2013, p.1).

“71% of teachers in Serbia have completed some kind of professional development program for teachers, while the average for TALIS countries is 90%” (OECD, 2013, p.1).

“The areas in which Serbian teachers most need professional development are working with students with disabilities (35% of teachers) and using new technologies in the workplace (21%)” (OECD, 2013, p.1).

Expectations from teachers and professional associates regarding the impact on the education and upbringing of gifted children and students, due to the opportunities to meet and work with gifted children, are proportionately high. Gagné also names the role of teachers in the education of the gifted as a facilitator, in addition to educational opportunities and programs. “In other words, Gagné’s model (Gagné, 2015, according to Altaras Dimitrijević and Tatić Janevski, 2016, p. 17) sees formal learning/education as the central path to building talents, and logically recognizes teachers/mentors, educational opportunities and programs for encouraging gifted students as “catalysts” who – among other factors – have the power to accelerate this process.” Research by Kadum and Orahovec (2018, p. 66) showed that “future teachers are willing to work with gifted students” but also that “gifted students will pose a burden to future teachers in their educational work”. According to the same authors, gifted students pose a great challenge to the entire school system. Their distinct abilities and interests require a creative and motivated approach from everyone; therefore, a gifted child, given that his or her abilities and possibilities are beyond what is offered in the regular school program, needs more knowledge, support, attention and work (ibidem, p. 67).

In his “Three Rings” concept, Renzulli (2012) emphasizes above-average (not necessarily exceptional) abilities, commitment to a task, and a penchant for creativity; he points out that students who are initially only “potentially gifted” can unexpectedly turn out to be “up to the challenge” if they are given the right educational opportunities.

But more important than the list of necessary and desirable conditions for the emergence of giftedness is the philosophy behind this model, which states that the epithet “gifted” should not be associated with students, but with what is offered to them in school. Gifted education, therefore, would not be the education of a specific group of students, but rather the education

¹ Teaching and learning International Survey – TALIS, an OECD-led international survey of teaching and learning; the survey collects data on teaching and learning conditions in 200 schools around the world with the aim of providing valid, timely and comparable assessments by school practitioners so that countries can review and formulate policies for the development and high quality of the teaching profession (OECD, 2013).

that provides the necessary conditions for the development of gifted behaviors, i.e. creative productivity. (Altaras Dimitrijević & Tatić Janevski, 2016 p. 19)

Altaras Dimitrijević points out that intellectually gifted students “*will need teachers who understand their characteristics and can support them in achieving high (ultimately expert) achievements.* If we additionally take into account the lower level of cooperation of these students and their greater tendency to question established rules and authorities, it is clear that they also need a teacher who will be able to foster intellectual curiosity and provide an appropriate framework for provocative questions and criticism.” (Altaras Dimitrijević & Tatić Janevski, 2016 p. 36)

What characteristics and competencies should a teacher have to work with gifted students?

Altaras Dimitrijević emphasizes that it is not difficult to conclude that successful encouragement of the gifted requires the following:

(1) in-depth professional competencies (e.g., exceptionally good knowledge of current knowledge and sources in a certain field); (2) knowledge of the characteristics of these students, which makes the teacher sensitive to their special educational needs and skilled in recognizing talents; (3) skills of differentiation and individualization of teaching, which the teacher applies in such a way as to make a genuine contribution to building expertise in a certain domain, and (4) a sense of responsibility for actualizing the gift. (Altaras Dimitrijević & Tatić Janevski, 2016 p. 94)

The same author believes that a competent teacher should have a positive attitude towards all the differences of students and the ability to appreciate talent, through knowledge and understanding (knowledge of the characteristics of the gifted and sensitivity to their specific characteristics), to similarities with gifted students (high intellectual abilities, intellectual openness, research competencies, in-depth knowledge/expertise in a given subject), which leads us to the question: Is a gifted teacher also necessary for working with gifted students?

Since research has shown insufficient information and training of teachers about giftedness and working with the gifted, the first proposed form of support for the work of teachers and professional associates is continuous professional development in this area. Various forms of professional development, advancement in the profession and profession, and forms of additional education within the framework of lifelong learning for teachers and professional associates will contribute to increasing their level of awareness of giftedness issues, improving competencies for working with gifted students, as well as improving the work with gifted students in primary school.

A large number of studies confirm that targeted information and training of teachers has positive effects on their attitudes towards providing special educational support to gifted students (Altaras Dimitrijević & Tatić Janevski, 2016 p. 95). Teachers who had the opportunity to acquire some knowledge in the field of gifted education, when working with these students, showed better teaching competencies (according to the assessment of trained observers) and

created a better working atmosphere (according to the assessment of the students themselves) than teachers without training” (ibidem, p. 96).

Bearing in mind that teachers and professional associates do not receive sufficient knowledge about working with gifted students within the framework of their initial education, it is worth considering:

...the option advocated by one group of experts (see e.g. Bangel, Moon, & Capobianco, 2010) - to include training for working with gifted students in the programs of initial teacher education. This proposal is also justified by the fact that gifted education is dominantly inclusive, which means that every teacher can (should) have the opportunity to encourage gifted students and contribute to the actualization of their abilities. (Altaras Dimitrijević & Tatić Janevski, 2016 p. 97)

Based on the results, we see that teachers would still be more motivated to work with potentially gifted students if they were introduced to some work strategies. This opens up the possibility for us to present different strategies for working with potentially gifted students to teachers through various training seminars. (Marinković & Đokić, 2016, p. 48) Based on the responses of the trained teachers, we see that our training seminars for working with potentially gifted students pay attention to important aspects (identification, working methods, types of tasks, introduction to literature) (ibidem).

Some teachers, mainly those who have undergone some form of professional training, when working with potentially gifted students, try to meet the needs of this category of students by applying different teaching forms, systems and methods of work, as well as enriched additional material that they prepare themselves or use ready-made, pre-prepared ones (Marinković & Đokić, 2016, p. 50).

Teachers emphasize the importance of interaction with their colleagues and the exchange of experiences in many other studies, for example, in Singapore and Chicago (Fan, 2014, according to Marinković & Đokić, 2016, p. 50).

Most teachers are motivated to attend seminars that can provide them with additional knowledge about working with this group of students, but financial resources and lack of time limit them in doing so. Our result coincides with the result obtained in the TALIS 2013 survey, in which the majority of the surveyed teachers cite material resources as the main disadvantage of attending seminars (Petrović et al., 2015, according to Marinković & Đokić, 2016, p. 50)

In the Data and Information Network, section Teachers, it is emphasized: The low status of the teaching profession due to teachers being paid less than the average salary in the public service, as well as unfavorable working conditions, have a negative impact on the quality and potential of students who enroll in teacher education studies. However, some favorable factors seem to mitigate this impact to some extent and influence the attractiveness of the teaching profession more than salary. Working in school is seen as a possible job that provides a basic sense of

social security, low workload and long vacations, but no economic or career advancement. (OECD, 2012, p. 115).

University admission: In principle, the criteria for admission to public universities, in addition to the entrance exam, include the average grades from secondary education and grades in subjects relevant to the study program to which the candidate is applying. While success in the entrance exam can earn a candidate a maximum of 60 out of a total of 100 points, the remaining 40% refers to other criteria. In special cases, candidates who have achieved exceptional results in national or international school competitions may request that points be awarded for these results as well. Applicants for art studies do not need to have completed secondary school to be admitted to an art academy. (OECD, 2012, p. 123)

It is recommended that the existing teacher education curriculum for both primary and secondary levels be reviewed to ensure better alignment with current priorities (OECD, 2012, p. 89).

2.3.3. Educational Practice: Forms of Support for the Education of Gifted Students

And although giftedness is generally reflected in speed and independence in mastering a certain domain, even the most gifted students should not be expected to quickly and independently reach expertise. It is up to education to support the actualization of giftedness by creating conditions for practicing a certain quality and quantity... (Altaras Dimitrijević & Tatić Janevski, 2016, p. 23).

The care of gifted children around the world is diverse and ranges from the absence of programs for gifted children in Japan and Scandinavian countries, through selective selection, as is the case in the USA, to the massive allowing of children to choose for themselves numerous courses for talented children in China (Dejić, Čebić, 2011, according to Marinković & Đokić, 2016, p. 39).

Educational programs for the gifted have been defined in a large number of states in the USA. The methods of organizing work and identifying talented students differ from state to state. Acceleration and alignment with educational standards are mainly used in working with gifted students (Johanson, 2000; Marinković, 2016, all according to Marinković & Đokić, 2016, p. 41).

In Russia. This is a country that advocates this type of education. There are specialized schools for gifted children (Mamiy, 2008; Marinković, 2016). Great importance is attached to mathematical olympiads and other competitions that represent significant preparation for the development of children's abilities (Dejić & Mihajlović, 2014). In the late 1980s, elementary schools took over the care of talents. Schools follow in-depth and enriched curricula, and

individual and differentiated forms of classroom work are represented. (Marinković & Đokić, 2016, p. 41)

Equal education for all children is promoted in China. There are so-called Olympic schools, education after regular classes, which were created in the desire to help gifted students, but also work in camps. Teachers who organize and prepare mathematics materials for working with gifted students are the best teachers in elementary and secondary schools, as well as universities (Karnes & Stephens, 2009; Marinković, 2016). Many schools organize work with gifted children in their free time, in the form of weekend programs. The gifted are worked with both through mentoring and within regular schooling, in the form of an extension of the regular program. (Marinković & Đokić, 2016, p. 41) but, as in Japan, there are no special programs and classes for potentially gifted students in primary school. (p. 42)

Romania does not have a special strategy for working with gifted students (Marinković, 2016, according to Marinković & Đokić, 2016, p. 42)

In order for a gifted child to be successful and properly develop his or her potential, he or she must have the support of the environment, its understanding, and challenging encouragement. This was also shown in a way by a study on the enriched program that students attended after school (Diezmann & Watters, 2000, according to Marinković & Đokić, 2016, p. 39).

...special educational measures (such as the development of an individual educational plan) are provided for students who, based on their exceptional abilities, achieve, or could achieve results above the level of general and special standards. It seems that, especially in this last part, our Law has in mind the difference between potential and achievement, and that it also takes into account the possibility that gifted students fail. (Altaras Dimitrijević et al., 2014, p. 147)

Research into the cognitive, motivational and socio-affective characteristics of gifted students, as well as the practice of counseling work with them, confirms the thesis that these students have certain specificities, which create special educational needs (see e.g. Colangelo & Assouline, 2000; Cross & Cross, 2015; Gross, 2009; Lee & Olszewski-Kubilus, 2006; Lovecky, 1992; Peterson & Moon, 2000; Robinson, 2000a; Silverman & Shires Golon, 2000; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2000; Wood, 2010); this is also supported by findings on the educational preferences that gifted students express when asked about it. (Altaras Dimitrijević & Tatić Janevski, 2016, p. 24)

Accelerated education, enrichment, special classes and many other types of support for gifted, highly capable, successful and motivated students have been guaranteed by law in our schools for more than two decades. The implementation of the recommended measures for gifted students has often been unsatisfactory. Special measures for gifted students in primary and secondary schools without a serious examination of the attitude towards them was the starting point for conducting this research. (Maksić, 1995, p. 270)

Group work:

Group work is a logical consequence of working with gifted students, and such work brings a lot of success, especially if it goes beyond the usual classroom and moves into the children's natural environment, the immediate or distant surroundings and homeland. Success is evident despite the detected objective difficulties that individuals have in adapting to school. (Adžić, 2011, p. 178)

Adžić's description of the first meeting of a heterogeneous group of gifted students with the aim of "changing dysfunctional behaviors of members that are called antisocial, deviant or undesirable in the wider environment" (Ajduković, 1997, p. 65) may be interesting:

At the first meeting of the newly established group, the rules of work and all possible ambiguities are explained to the children. Getting to know each other is organized to help group members relax. During the work, interactive activities will alternate, in which creative expression, thinking, expression through movement, creative problem solving, and stimulation of thought processes are dominant (Cvetković-Lay & Majurec-Sekulić, 1989), activities for the development of children's social skills; activities for the development of better relationships with others, learning skills for resolving frustrations and conflicts, and non-violent conflict resolution. (Ajduković & Pećnik, 1994). Finally, it is necessary to organize farewell games. They can create a good atmosphere and allow group members to disperse in a good mood, carrying with them pleasant and memorable emotions. (Bunčić et al., 1993). All of this can be done in the immediate school environment, that is, outside the classroom, and will yield infinitely better results. (Adžić, 2011, p. 179).

The most important role of the educator in the group is to recognize a gifted child who shows talent or who has the potential to develop talent as early as possible. It is also important that the educator is aware of his or her knowledge and incompetence in working with a gifted child, and that he or she has help and support in order to work with him or her in a quality manner. It is necessary to provide support and necessary information to the parents of gifted children (Cvetković Lay & Sekulić Majurec, 2008, according to Fuček, 2017, p. 27).

2.3.4. Educational Practice: Models and Procedures in Educational Work With Gifted Students

In a publication on gifted education in 21 European countries, an overview of the existence of support for gifted children at the national level is given through the (non)existence of special measures from the framework given in the International Standard Classification of Education (International Standard Classification of Education, 1997, according to Monks et al., 2003):

- Early entry
- Skipping classes
- Shared classes with higher grades
- Group acceleration/acceleration

- Workshops
- Cooperation with companies and non-profit organizations
- Extracurricular activities
- Individual mentors
- Independent learning
- School internal competitions
- Psychological counseling
- Summer camps
- Festivals
- Exhibitions
- School external competitions
- Performances (artistic, ...)
- Following courses at ISCED level (International Standard Classification of Education), levels 4-6
- Special schools
- Other.

The authors of the same inventory developed a data collection questionnaire covering six main topics, through which the data in the report are presented:

- 1) School legislation, regulations and guidelines
- 2) Special provisions on gifted education
- 3) Identification criteria
- 4) Teacher training and/or upgrading of teacher competences and networks for the exchange of experiences
- 5) Research and professional development, and teacher counseling
- 6) Priorities and further expectations in gifted education. (Monks & Pfluger, 2005).

The basic principle of gifted development: "Ensuring the expansion and deepening of the knowledge base, while ensuring the flexible and creative use of the knowledge base, and in an atmosphere of security, acceptance and a sense of continuous personal progress." (Čudina-Obradović, 1990, according to Adžić, 2011, p. 180)

Marinković and Đokić state (2016, p. 40) that the results of Maričić and Milinković's research show that in working with students who are potentially gifted in mathematics, good effects are achieved within the framework of differentiated teaching, which teachers occasionally apply in their work.

Based on research into contemporary teaching systems as hypothetical models of individualized teaching, which is based on theoretical assumptions and assumptions of developmental teaching and which combines elements of macro and micro teaching in a unique way... This theoretical model defines relevant statistical and dynamic parameters of individualization, namely:

- a wide range of teaching goals and tasks;

- diverse teaching content, didactic materials, multimedia sources of knowledge and a wide variety of teaching aids;
- numerous didactic-methodical procedures, teaching procedures, changes in circumstances (environment) and context;
- a rich database regarding individual student interests, abilities, learning styles, long-term goals and plans.

In contemporary teaching systems, the emphasis is on creative learning. (Vlajkovic, 2011)

Differentiated teaching, project teaching and mentoring work are equally successfully applied as special forms of support in the education of gifted students, which have been proven to help better education, knowledge and engagement of gifted students and greater participation of gifted students in the process of their own education.

Comparing individualized teaching with traditional teaching, it was found that the following advantages are on the side of individualized teaching:

- The overall organization assumes greater freedom and flexibility in adapting to the most widely understood conditions and the teacher can personalize the work with students more by explaining what and how they should learn. Thus, the teacher is in a position to manage the progress of students much more closely and to provide more accurate assessments of difficulties and ways of mastering them.
- There are greater possibilities for varying different teaching contents, teaching and learning methods, as well as learning materials.
- There is a possibility for students to allocate time for individual learning differently, i.e. the different learning speeds of different students are taken into account.
- The teacher is obliged to prepare different sources and means that ensure better teaching efficiency.
- The teacher can more accurately predict certain outcomes, both in relation to the procedures and materials used, and in relation to the students themselves. (Vlajkovic, 2011)

2.4. INDIVIDUALIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL WORK WITH GIFTED STUDENTS

2.4.1. The Importance of Individualizing Educational Work With Gifted Students

Altaras Dimitrijević believes that the educational needs of gifted students are specific and arise from their cognitive and socio-affective specificities; these are: special needs in terms of the pace/dynamics of learning, special needs in terms of the nature of content and tasks, special needs in terms of structure and control, special needs in terms of social aspects of learning, and special needs in terms of teacher characteristics (Altaras Dimitrijević & Tatić Janevski, 2016, pp.33-38). Intellectually gifted students, according to the same author, “are characterized by a

special (read: particularly pronounced) need for challenge, choice, and independence in school learning.”

“Planning adequate school treatment must also take into account the demands of students, in addition to data on their abilities, preferences and capacities. Differences in educational expectations of other and gifted students must be recognized and included in the shaping of the school environment. For example, accepting a certain combination of educational goals could make them more achievable. Otherwise, misunderstanding will start from the beginning. Taking into account the effects of the characteristics of the people involved in education could improve the education of all students.” (Maksić, 1995, p. 280).

2.4.2. Educational Practice: Measures of Individualization in Educational Work With Gifted Students

"In the countries of the European Community and North America, they have long understood the importance of curricula based on an individual approach to the student, including an individual approach to gifted students, therefore such curricula and programs are regularly implemented for gifted children of preschool and school age. The programs often differ, but they have a common starting point, which is to provide the best and most appropriate content from the school system through an individual approach in a way that meets the needs of the child-student." (Adžić, 2011, p. 174)

"The best results in working with gifted children will certainly be seen in mentoring classes where the teacher has enough time for the student and his needs, and in addition, the student himself will be able to suggest which content will be covered. This way of working is particularly beneficial for the development of abilities in gifted children because it is not limited in time by the school bell, but can last in accordance with interest and depth of entry into a certain subject. Teachers should cooperate in their work so that interest is not misdirected. The most common ways of working are extracurricular classes and work on projects, which are also susceptible to the fact that work on them can be extended beyond the regular 45 minutes, as is the case in the classic school timetable. Additional classes and extracurricular content, organized according to similar principles in working with gifted children, have proven to be an important link in the overall educational work with this population of children” (Ibidem, 2011, p. 176).

Projects, experiments, demonstrations, fieldwork, the involvement of external collaborators, parents, families and the wider social community provide countless opportunities for interdisciplinary work in multiple areas and interests at once, but without fear of oversaturation or failure. (Ibid, 2011, p. 176)

In integrated teaching, students can express their knowledge, skills, cognitions and preferences on the same content in multiple subjects and can solve a specific problem from the point of

view of each subject included in such a way of working. This is where the possibilities of logical and critical thinking, reasoning and making complex conclusions come into play. (Ibid, 2011, p. 176)

For working with gifted students, prepared differentiated tasks can be used in which the student himself will choose the method of solving and the complexity in accordance with his preferences and capabilities. Individual tasks can also be prepared for different areas, and most often these are problem-type tasks. (Ibid, 2011, p. 177)

Overcoming underachievement: “In order to answer the question of how to prevent or “treat” the occurrence of underachievement, it is important to know what intellectually motivates gifted underachievers (and gifted students in general). According to the results of our research, but also other studies on the educational needs of gifted students (see, e.g., Hawkins, 1997; Rogers, 2007), these are, first of all, theoretical analyses and philosophical discussions; divergent tasks, which allow for different solutions and interpretations, and self-expression; music, art and literature – in short, material that does not necessarily have a direct connection with every-day and practical matters (which modern schools ruthlessly weed out of the curriculum), but which – from the perspective of a gifted adolescent student – is psychologically/philosophically extremely useful and exciting. In addition to offering content of this kind, it would be important for schools to recognize the pursuit of creativity as a pursuit of high goals and to put “creative tasks” in the service of realizing the highest educational standards (instead of treating them as an “interesting hobby” or a “break from real learning”).” (Altaras Dimitrijević et al., 2014, p. 168)

2.4.3. Educational Practice: Development and Implementation of Individual Educational Plan Three (IEP3) for Gifted Students

“This certainly applies to the cooperation between teachers and parents of gifted students. The emphasis in such cooperation should be on mutual awareness of giftedness and the needs of the gifted child so that any further cooperation is directed towards the well-being and progress of the gifted child. Any work with gifted students should undergo a certain evaluation that will also include the parents of gifted children” (Adžić, 2011, p. 175)

The Law on the Foundations of the Education System (2019) stipulates that “For a student who achieves results that exceed the expected level of educational achievements, the institution ensures the adjustment of the method of implementing the school program and the preparation, adoption and implementation of an individual educational plan. An individual educational plan (hereinafter: IEP) is a special act, which aims at the optimal development of the child and student and achieving the outcome of education and upbringing, in accordance with the prescribed goals and principles, i.e. satisfying the educational and upbringing needs of the child and student. The IEP is developed by the team for additional support for the child, i.e. the

student, based on previously implemented, recorded and evaluated individualization measures and the developed pedagogical profile of the child, student and adult, and is implemented after the consent of the parent, i.e. another legal representative. If the parent, i.e. another legal representative, unjustifiably refuses to participate in the development or give consent to the IEP, the institution is obliged to inform the competent social welfare institution in order to protect the best interests of the child, i.e. the student.”

The Law on the Foundations of the Education and Upbringing System defines IEP 3 as “expanding and deepening the content of educational and upbringing work for a student with exceptional abilities.”

The procedure for adopting the IEP3 is further stated:

“The IEP is adopted by the pedagogical board of the institution at the proposal of the inclusive education team, i.e. the team for providing additional support to the child and student.

The team for providing additional support to the child in a preschool institution consists of a teacher, a professional associate, an associate, a parent, or another legal representative, and in accordance with the needs of the child, a pedagogical assistant, or a personal companion of the child, at the proposal of the parent, or another legal representative.

The team for providing additional support to the student at school consists of a class teacher, or a subject teacher, a class teacher, a professional associate, a parent, or another legal representative, and in accordance with the needs of the student, a pedagogical assistant, or a personal companion of the student, at the proposal of the parent, or another legal representative.”

In the *Regulation on further instructions for determining the right to an individual educational plan, its implementation and evaluation*, “IEP is a special act of the institution that plans additional support in the education and upbringing of a child, student, or adult if individualization measures have not led to the achievement of the child’s well-being, or the achievement of the educational outcome or to the satisfaction of the educational needs of students with exceptional abilities.”

The first step in developing an IEP3 is to develop a *Pedagogical Profile of the student*. It is created on the basis of data obtained by collecting from all participants in the educational process, teachers, professional associates, parents, students, but also from experts who are familiar with the educational practice of the student for whom the Pedagogical Profile is being developed.

The *Regulation on Further Instructions for Determining the Right to an Individual Education Plan, Its Implementation and Evaluation* stipulates that:

“If, during the monitoring process, an educator, teacher or professional associate determines that there are physical, communication or social obstacles that adversely affect the well-being and development of a child, student or adult and the expected outcomes of education and upbringing, data collection shall be initiated to form documentation for the purpose of providing appropriate support in education and upbringing.” The educator, teacher, or professional associate, in addition to the data referred to in paragraph 2 of this article, collects data from

various sources: from parents, or other legal representatives (hereinafter referred to as: parent), experts outside the educational institution who know the child, student, or adult well, from peers and the child, student, or adult himself, using various instruments and techniques (systematic observation of the child's, student's, or adult's activities in different situations, conversation, testing, interview and questionnaire for the student and others who know the child, or student. Medical findings are, if necessary, an integral part of the documentation.

"Based on the collected data and documentation referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3 of this article, the professional associate coordinates the preparation and, in cooperation with the educator, or teacher and the parent, prepares a pedagogical profile of the child, student, or adult (hereinafter referred to as: pedagogical profile). The pedagogical profile contains a description of the child's educational situation, student, or adult and is the basis for planning the educator's strategies to support the well-being of the child, or an individualized way of working with the student, or adult."

The student's pedagogical profile should be a document that will include a framework plan for setting goals and expected outcomes for the student in several areas. The Regulation on Detailed Instructions for Determining the Right to an Individual Educational Plan, Its Implementation and Evaluation stipulates that "The educator, teacher, or professional associate monitors the development and learning process of the child, student, or adult through the areas: learning skills, social and communication skills, independence and self-care."

There is also a Form for Developing a Pedagogical Profile (*Regulation on Detailed Instructions for Determining the Right to an Individual Educational Plan, Its Implementation and Evaluation*).

As experts state (Altaras Dimitrijević & Tatić Janevski, 2016), "The pedagogical profile has a very important function - it determines in which subjects or areas the student should be provided with additional support and which types of support, i.e. which educational measures are most appropriate for the needs of that student. Therefore, the development of a pedagogical profile, both formally and essentially, represents the first, inevitable step in the implementation of individualization and IEP."

The same authors describe in detail:

After the development of the pedagogical profile, the development of an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP3) is initiated. Teachers, professional associates, students and parents participate in the development of IEP3. As authors state, "Individualized work with a student with exceptional abilities should take place with a certain continuity and be incorporated into monthly and daily preparations for classes/lessons. Of course, a significant part of individualization can be carried out through specially designed activities in additional classes, that is, through extracurricular and even out-of-school activities (e.g. by referring the student to join a specialized extracurricular organization and monitoring his work there). However, for meaningful and effective encouragement of giftedness, it is of the utmost importance that individualized support measures find their place in regular classes and that what the student does outside of school is also taken into account in it (e.g. successes in competitions, research work done in an extracurricular organization, products of their own creative "projects" and hobbies). "The task of the teacher, with the support of professional associates, is to enrich the

content and activities in their daily preparations and monthly plans with tasks, activities and learning styles that will encourage giftedness. Differentiated teaching in different areas can play a key role in regular classes (tasks of different levels of complexity, student activities, time required for certain content and time required for the implementation of additional content, space for work, as well as cognitive learning styles and content evaluation. Also, differentiation can be reflected in the way students present their solutions and content, respecting their creativity). When developing the IEP3, it is necessary to take into account all the measures proposed in the student's pedagogical profile.

The developed IOP3 is not final, it is subject to changes and revisions, and monitoring and evaluation are also necessary. According to the Regulation on further instructions for determining the right to an individual educational plan, its implementation and evaluation ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 88/17 and 27/18 - other law) "The evaluation of the IEP within the institution is carried out by the Team according to the previously determined dynamics in the IEP and according to the emerging need, in the first year of enrollment every three months, and in all subsequent years at the beginning of each semester, or working year. The evaluation of the IEP is based on an analysis of which support measures were effective and which planned outcomes the child, student, or adult achieved.

Based on the evaluation of the IEP, the Team assesses whether it is further necessary for the student to:

- 1) revise the existing IEP;
- 2) write a new IEP;
- 3) cancel the IEP and develop a Plan of Individualization Measures;

External evaluation of the IEP is carried out by an educational counselor, or advisor external collaborator during professional and pedagogical supervision. As part of professional and pedagogical supervision, the fulfillment of the conditions in the procedure for adopting the IEP is determined, the content and implementation of the IEP are evaluated.

Data on the results of the IEP evaluation are an integral part of the IEP documentation.

2.5. ANALYSIS IN THE FIELD OF UPBRINGING AND EDUCATION OF GIFTED CHILDREN AND STUDENTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

The analysis of the situation in the area of importance for working with gifted children and students in the country, but also beyond, was carried out through the analysis of recent studies and research in this area. Available studies and research, official documents and legal acts, as well as other publications dealing with this topic, published in the last six years (exceptionally even earlier for sources related to theoretical concepts and positions), such as manuals, monographs and collections, were analyzed. The search for sources was conducted in Serbian and English, using academic databases that are available and searching for scientific and

professional publications and studies using well-known search services and databases (EBSCO, Wiley, Sage, Springer and SciIndeks), and through the Consortium of Serbian Libraries for Unified Collection (KOBSON). The findings were systematized and certain recommendations arising from them were given, and they are related to working with gifted children and students in an educational, inclusive context.

2.5.1. Terminological Demarcations

Researchers note that “in professional literature, primarily psychological and pedagogical, the terms giftedness, talent, genius, creativity are linked, but are also defined differently” (Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017, p. 6). Gallagher believes that gifted children are those who are capable of high achievements, or who have potential ability in some of the following areas: general intellectual ability; special academic ability (for certain subjects); creative or productive thinking; leadership ability; visual and other arts; psychomotor abilities” (Đorđević & Đorđević, 2016, p. 142)

In the educational system of the Republic of Serbia, gifted children and students are referred to as “children and students with exceptional abilities”. The Law on the Foundations of the Education System (2019) also mentions in Article 7 that children and students with exceptional abilities are actually talented and gifted children and students. However, the laws do not specify who belongs to these groups of children and students, for example, whether they are generally above-average intelligent or successful and capable in some field. The legal framework does not provide explanations, definitions, or criteria that describe these phenomena and terms in more detail, so their use is left to the personal assessment of each individual who uses them.

For the purposes of this analysis, we will use the term “gifted children and students” to describe all children and students who have a talent, gift, pronounced ability, general above-average abilities, intellectual giftedness, above-average academic success, or more of the above at the same time, regardless of the field in which they occur.

2.5.2. Defining the Concept of Giftedness

Giftedness, as a phenomenon, has been the subject of study and research in the world since ancient times, and efforts to define it have been going on for just as long. “The concept of giftedness is understood very complexly today and the study of this phenomenon is approached from different perspectives, but what could be the common denominator for all interpretations of the phenomenon of giftedness is precisely the potential of a child or person to achieve above-average results in one or more areas of human activity” (Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017, p. 6). Researchers and scientists have not yet agreed on a single, predominant definition of the concept, but it is clear from the literature that this concept implies exceptional abilities in one or more areas that set an individual apart from the majority in their environment. For example, here is a comprehensive definition of giftedness provided by Clark (2013):

Giftedness is a biologically based concept that denotes a high level of intelligence and indicates advanced and accelerated development of brain functions that include physical sensations, emotions, cognition, and intuition. Such advanced and accelerated functions may be expressed through abilities such as those involving cognition, creativity, academic ability, leadership, and the visual and performing arts. Gifted individuals are those who demonstrate, or show promise of, performing at high levels in these areas and who, because of such advanced and accelerated development, require services or support activities not typically provided by schools in order to fully develop their abilities. (Clark, 2013)

Renzulli (2011) emphasizes that in defining giftedness, three elements must be included: above-average intelligence, a high level of commitment, and a high level of creativity in the individual. Other authors emphasize definitions that omit high intelligence as a condition or necessary characteristic of giftedness, believing that giftedness in itself does not necessarily imply high intelligence; examples that speak in favor of this assumption are extraordinarily gifted individuals such as savant or doubly exceptional people whose intelligence level is often not high, but sometimes below average, and giftedness is unquestionable.

As Milić (2011) states, Gagné distinguishes above-average competence in areas of ability – intellectual, creative, socio-emotional, sensorimotor – as giftedness, in relation to above-average competence in human activities, which he considers talent.

Some authors make another kind of distinction between giftedness and talent: Gagné (1995; 1997; 2005) uses these two terms to distinguish between “natural” (gift) and “systematically developed” ability (talent); conversely, Feldman (1986) links the concept of talent to potential, and the concept of giftedness to achievement; Robinson (2005) believes that talent should refer to domain-specific abilities, and giftedness to more general abilities; finally, in Feldhusen’s conception (1986), talent – defined as a domain-specific ability – represents one of the components (subcategory) of giftedness (Altaras, 2006, p. 51).

2.5.3. Gifted Children and Students in the Educational System of the Republic of Serbia - Strategic and Legal Framework

The Government of the Republic of Serbia has adopted the *Strategy for the Development of Education in Serbia until 2020* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 107/12) as well as the *Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for the Development of Education in Serbia until 2020* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 16/2015).

The Strategy deals with determining the purpose, objectives, directions, instruments and mechanisms for the development of the education system in the Republic of Serbia until 2020. The Action Plan specifies individual activities, elaborates methods of implementation, deadlines, key stakeholders and executors, monitoring instruments and indicators of progress, as well as procedures for reporting and assessing the effects of the planned strategic measures. Regarding work with gifted students, the Action Plan, out of a total of 157 actions distributed in 15 areas, foresees only one action that relates to a part of these students: Establishment of a unified public system of funds and foundations for encouraging the gifted and talented (area:

Secondary general and artistic education and upbringing); in addition, an action is also foreseen: Establishment of a unified system of awards and rewards for students for good educational achievements at the level of the Republic of Serbia (area: Primary education and upbringing). And, finally, in the action: Development of inclusive education (area: Subsystems in education), the Action Plan determines the outcomes, i.e. results of the action - Adopted and implemented by-laws in the function of raising the quality of inclusive education, and Quality education for all children, pupils and students. The results presented in this way suggest that this action should also include gifted children and students. However, according to the listed progress monitoring indicators (Coverage of children and youth in formal education at the annual level for each generation, and Success and progress of children and youth from vulnerable groups), it is clear that the action does not apply to gifted children and students.

The recent *Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Education Development Strategy until 2020* (2018) does not mention giftedness, or academic giftedness, as one of the factors influencing achievement in the final exam:

There are no large variations in student achievement within districts in the final exam at the end of primary education, that is, they are within the expected limits. This is supported by the findings that, although it would be expected that students from developed municipalities achieve better achievements, the results of students from municipalities of different levels of development are quite uniform, except for the most developed municipalities. Overall, a weak correlation was found between student achievement and the economic development parameters of the municipalities from which the students come. However, the exceptionally high student achievement in some underdeveloped municipalities calls for caution when it comes to these conclusions and requires further research and analysis. (Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Education Development Strategy until 2020, 2018, p. 16)

The Report also mentions a new approach to the creation of teaching and learning plans and programs according to a new paradigm oriented towards learning outcomes and the development of competencies, integrated into the new umbrella education law (Law on the Foundations of the Education and Training System, 2019).

Instead of the previous mandatory and recommended content, the new programs should include key concepts of the subject content. The programs should also contain instructions for the didactic and methodological implementation of the program, instructions for formative and summative assessment of students and methods of adaptation for students with developmental disabilities, students with exceptional abilities, for education and upbringing in the language of a national minority and adult education. (Report on the implementation of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Education Development Strategy until 2020, 2018, p. 99)

From the above, it can be expected that the programs themselves will in some way instruct teachers on how to adapt them to work with gifted students, which has not been the case so far. The Law on the Foundations of the Education System, in the section entitled "The Right to Education", Article 3 states: "A person with exceptional abilities has the right to education that

respects his or her special educational and upbringing needs, in the educational system, in special classes or a special school, in accordance with this and a special law."

In the section on the Rights of the Child and Pupils, of the same Law, Article 79 states:

"The institution, or rather the employees of the institution, are obliged to ensure the realization of the rights of the child and pupil, and in particular the right to:

- 1) high-quality educational work that ensures the realization of the principles and goals set out in Articles 7 and 8 of this Law;
- 2) respect for the individual;
- 3) support for the all-round development of the individual, support for particularly expressed talents and their affirmation."

In the section on the General Principles of Education and Upbringing, Article 7 pays special attention to the realization of the ten general principles of education and upbringing. Among other things, it states that attention should be paid to "identifying, monitoring and encouraging pupils and adults with exceptional abilities (talented and gifted) while ensuring the conditions for them, regardless of their own material conditions, to have access to appropriate levels of education and upbringing and institutions."

Since 2009, the umbrella education law in Serbia has determined the possibility of developing an individual educational plan three (IEP 3), which "implies the expansion and deepening of the content of educational work for a student with exceptional abilities." In the section on the Individual Educational Plan, Article 76 of the ZOSOV determines to whom the institution adapts the work and develops an IEP 3: "For a student who achieves results that exceed the expected level of educational achievements, the institution ensures the adaptation of the method of implementing the school program and the development, adoption and implementation of an individual educational plan" (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 88/2017, 27/2018 - other laws and 10/2019). A similar description of a student is given by the Law on Primary Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 55/2013, 101/2017, 27/2018 - other laws 10/2019) in Article 67: "A student who excels in knowledge and abilities.... " (2019).

The Law on Basic Education (2019) contains a section on Education and Upbringing of Students with Exceptional Abilities, Article 11, which states:

"A student with exceptional abilities has the right to an individual educational plan that enables his or her development and progress to take place according to his or her abilities and interests, in accordance with the Law.

A student with exceptional musical or ballet abilities has the right to acquire musical or ballet education and upbringing on the basis of a unified school curriculum for talents, which is adopted on the basis of the curriculum for teaching and learning in basic education and upbringing and the curriculum for teaching and learning in music or ballet education and upbringing."

The aforementioned section refers to students with exceptional abilities in general, and specifically to students who have exceptional ballet or musical abilities. However, further on in the text of the Law, in the section Enrollment in a music or ballet school, Article 57 states:

“A child and student of primary and secondary school who passes the entrance exam to determine musical or ballet abilities may enroll in a primary music or ballet school, in accordance with the curriculum and teaching program for primary music education and upbringing and the curriculum and teaching program for primary ballet education and upbringing.”

It can be concluded that exceptional ballet or musical abilities are actually abilities that are expressed by achievement in the entrance exam to determine ballet or musical abilities. However, these exams do not reveal or identify exceptional musical or ballet abilities, but only determine the presence of basic predispositions for practicing ballet and music (such as hearing, rhythm or coordinated movement).

What should be emphasized as encouraging is that the aforementioned Article 11 of the Law on Primary Education emphasizes, in addition to abilities, the interests of students with exceptional abilities as the basis for the development of an IEP that will enable their development and progress. The interests of students with exceptional abilities follow their talents. Therefore, it is very important to enable these students to satisfy and enrich their interests, thereby developing their talents, through various types of engagement in curricular and extracurricular activities and through the most diverse possible sources.

The assessment of gifted students is legally regulated in the case when they are educated according to an individual educational plan in Article 60 of the Law on Primary Education: "A student with exceptional abilities who acquires education and upbringing in an adapted and enriched manner, through the application of an individual educational plan, is assessed based on monitoring the achievement of prescribed outcomes and standards of achievement and engagement."

The same law also provides for faster student advancement in Article 67, according to which a student who excels in knowledge and abilities can graduate from school in less than eight years. During one school year, a student can complete two grades, and the teachers' council determines whether the conditions for faster student advancement have been met. The conditions and procedure for student advancement are prescribed by the minister. Also, the same law provides in Article 11 that a student with exceptional abilities enrolled in the first grade of a secondary music or ballet school, who has completed the seventh grade of elementary school, has the right to complete elementary school by taking grade exams.

The law also provides for two special forms of school attendance (Article 38): distance learning and homeschooling. For these forms of work, bylaws are expected to be adopted that will regulate them in more detail, as well as for faster student advancement, which is otherwise not new in our educational system and practice.

Working with gifted preschool children is not clearly emphasized in the regulations governing the upbringing and education of children and students; except that it may be expected that gifted children will be recognized in the new circumstances prescribed by the Fundamentals of Preschool Education Programs (2018, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 88/17 and 27/18 - other law"), their detection, recognition, identification, or special work with them at preschool age is not actually regulated by law. It is exceptionally provided in the Law on Primary Education in Article 27 that a primary music or primary ballet school may also

implement a program of music or ballet education for preschool children for a period of up to one year. The right of a child and student to an individual educational plan is defined by the new special Rulebook on further instructions for determining the right to an individual educational plan, its implementation and evaluation (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 74 of October 5, 2018). The Rulebook defines more detailed instructions for exercising the right to an individual educational plan, its implementation and evaluation in preschool, primary and secondary schools, which aims at the optimal development of the child, student and adult and their progress and independence in the peer group; In the section entitled The Right to an Individual Educational Plan, Article 2 of the Regulation states that "a student with exceptional abilities who is receiving primary and secondary education also has the right to an adapted method of education according to the IEP in terms of expanding and deepening the content of learning". This act stipulates that in preschool, primary and secondary schools, when it is established through development monitoring that the child needs additional support, additional documentation is then collected, a pedagogical profile of the child is created and individualization measures are planned and implemented.

Individualization measures are implemented through:

- 1) reasonable adjustment of the space and conditions in which activities take place in a preschool institution, i.e. teaching at school (removing physical barriers, designing additional and special forms of activities, creating a special schedule of activities, etc.);
- 2) adjustment of work methods, teaching aids and didactic materials, methods of giving instructions and assigning tasks, monitoring progress, methods of acquiring content, testing knowledge, organizing learning situations, setting rules of behavior and communication, etc.
- 3) changing the content of activities in the educational group, i.e. the content of learning and the outcomes of education and upbringing" (Article 4).

If such individualization measures do not bring results, an IEP is developed, which, according to the aforementioned Regulation, is "a special act of the institution that plans additional support in the education and upbringing of a child, student, or adult if individualization measures have not led to the achievement of the child's well-being, i.e. the achievement of the outcomes of education and upbringing or to meeting the educational needs of students with exceptional abilities." Article 2 of the same act notes that a student with exceptional abilities who is receiving primary and secondary education and upbringing also has the right to an adapted method of education under the IEP in the sense of expanding and deepening the content of learning, while Article 6 states that for a student with exceptional abilities, the school shall adopt an adapted and enriched IEP. In addition, Article 7 states that preschool institutions adopt IEP1, and primary and secondary schools adopt IEP1, IEP2 and IEP3. Therefore, individualization measures can be applied to gifted preschool children, and individual educational plan three can be introduced upon entering school, if individualization measures "do not lead to the satisfaction of the educational needs" of the gifted child, or student, as stated in the Rulebook.

Regarding the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), some authors emphasize that in addition to the necessity of harmonizing national legislation, it is necessary to take a number of other measures and state: "states improve the

position of children through other measures, such as establishing national bodies for the protection of children's rights, establishing ombudsmen for children's rights, providing support to specialized citizens' associations, specializing the judiciary, creating a special policy in the field of children's rights, improving education... (Žunić-Cicvarić, et al., 2013). The Report of the Provincial Ombudsman (2017) raises the question of the extent to which our education system responds to the rights of the child, guaranteed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and emphasizes that education should be focused on the development of the child's personality. and the development of giftedness and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. It is essential that voices emphasizing the obligation to respect the rights of all children be clear and loud enough so that they are unambiguously understood and accepted by all participants in the educational process.

Analyzing the provisions of the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 22/2009), the Provincial Ombudsman states the significance of some of them for gifted students, i.e. exceptional abilities:

Article 7 defines that indirect discrimination exists when a person or group of persons is placed in a less favourable position by an act, conduct or omission that is ostensibly based on the principle of equality and the prohibition of discrimination, unless it is justified by a legitimate aim, and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary. Since students with exceptional abilities, as a rule, attend regular schools and have access to education like other students, they do not appear to be in an unequal position compared to other students. However, precisely placing students with exceptional abilities in the same position as other students can lead to their discrimination, because their specific characteristics, both intellectually and in terms of social and emotional functioning, are not taken into account, which leads to a failure to provide an education that meets their needs and allows the full development of their capacities and potential. (Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017, pp. 15-16)

The differences and inconsistencies of by-laws also contribute to the misunderstanding, as in the following example. The regulation that regulates the detailed conditions for assessing the needs for providing additional educational, health and social support to a child, student and adult, as well as the composition and method of work of the interdepartmental commission (Regulation on Additional Educational, Health and Social Support to a Child, Student and Adult, 2018), does not mention the development of IEP 3 as a support measure proposed by the commission, and for IEP 2 it says that it involves "adjusting the goals, content and methods of achieving the teaching and learning program and the outcomes of educational work, i.e. changing the teaching and learning plan". The first statement - that the opinion of the commission is not necessary for the adoption of IEP 3 - is confirmed by the second by-law (Regulations on further instructions for determining the right to an individual educational plan, its implementation and evaluation, 2017), which again emphasizes that IEP2 represents "a modified teaching and learning program in which, in addition to the content provided for in IEP 1, the adjustment of the outcomes of education and upbringing and the adjustment of the content for one, more or all subjects are planned".

It is clear that it is not reasonable to expect the pedagogical board of the institution to change the learning objectives and outcomes, general and specific subject competencies and other parts of the teaching and learning program for a gifted student without obtaining the opinion of the interdepartmental commission, and that, on the other hand, it is necessary to obtain the same opinion if the teaching and learning plan is changed, i.e. the list of subjects or activities and their annual and weekly lesson plan (which for a gifted student we can expect to always expand and enrich). Therefore, in this regard too, there is a disagreement, i.e. the illogical listing of the same procedures in multiple sources.

2.5.4. Identification of Gifted Children and Students

Researchers advocate early identification of gifted children and early stimulation of children in development, i.e. maximum intellectual stimulation and the use of all means that contribute to such stimulation (Đorđević & Maksić, 2005; according to the Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017, p. 9).

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, in its Recommendation on the Education of Gifted Children, emphasizes the importance of early identification of gifted children and the need for research and improvement of identification procedures for these children.

When talking about the possibilities of early identification, it is also important to note that these possibilities have recently been further narrowed by circumstances. Newer legal solutions in our country have repealed some provisions of previous laws that were important for enabling early identification of gifted children and encouraging their development, which is now not possible in such a way.

It is necessary to note that in accordance with the new Law on the Foundations of the Education System, IOP3 applies only to students with exceptional abilities, but not to preschool children. Namely, the Law on the Foundations of the Education System, which has been repealed, IOP3 was defined as the enrichment and expansion of the content of educational work for a child and student with exceptional abilities. Based on the above, it can be concluded that the new legal solution makes preschool children with exceptional abilities “invisible”. (Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017, p. 19)

However, in order to obtain reliable information about a child’s giftedness from observation, it must be conducted from multiple angles and from multiple sources. It is also necessary to use other methods of acquiring knowledge about a gifted child and the characteristics of his or her giftedness. “The most reliable method of identifying gifted children is observing children, monitoring their behavior in various activities and games, and then encouraging them in various areas” (Đorđević & Maksić, 2005; according to the Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017, p. 9).

Today, there is awareness and knowledge that giftedness is a complex phenomenon, so the use of multiple sources of information about individual differences is recommended: observations of parents, group and individual tests, data on achievements in individual subjects and activities,

measures of creativity, recognition by teachers, various ranking procedures, data from peers and friends, checklists, sociometric surveys, data, reports and opinions of teachers and experts in various fields of talents and giftedness. (Đorđević & Đorđević, 2016, p.86)

Numerous studies have confirmed that there are particular difficulties in identifying certain groups of children, such as children with developmental disabilities, children from disadvantaged family situations, culturally deprived children, children with lower academic achievement, migrant children, and gifted girls. The most common stereotypes mentioned in connection with difficulties in identifying and working with gifted girls are stereotypes held by parents and experts, but researchers have also addressed the position of gifted girls from other angles (Agrawal & Purohit, 2014; Ford et al., 2019; Anderson & Martin, 2018; Boston & Cimpian, 2018; Fugate & Gentry, 2016; Sturza-Milić, 2008; Reis, 2002; Silverman, 2013, all according to the Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017).

We will also mention the data of the Gifted Development Center (eng: Gifted Development Center) that the results of their recent research continuously show that there is no difference in the number of gifted boys and girls despite the fact that boys are more often identified as gifted (in the last 33 years, approximately 60 percent of the more than 6,000 children brought for testing were boys). Also, centers for giftedness in Australia report that boys make up three quarters of children who are recommended for testing and checking for giftedness.

The need for additional education of educators, teachers and professional associates on the identification of gifted students is confirmed by the results of research that find that even professional associates (to whom they are most often referred in connection with the identification of gifted students) have a different understanding of this phenomenon and that, although some teachers and professional associates are aware that there are so-called "gifted underachievers" and that gifted students do not necessarily achieve above-average results, the majority still single out as students with exceptional abilities those who achieve outstanding results in individual or group subjects, who show interest, commitment and motivation for success, work and learning. (Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017, p. 30)

The literature also mentions the Phased Model of Discovery and Identification of Gifted Students (Andrić, 2006, p. 21). The model recommends that the process take place in three phases: recognition, identification and verification.

2.5.5. Supporting the Education of Gifted Children and Students

Research that addresses the need to develop and encourage giftedness, talent and creativity is justified, as the following quote inspiringly speaks about:

Giftedness, talent and creativity still provoke various comments that point to their multidimensionality and conditioning, prejudices and misunderstanding. The diversity of scientific interpretations, the difficulties in measuring them and the examination of beliefs and implicit theories about these phenomena together indicate that we are still far from designing the most appropriate support that would encourage the manifestation and development of high abilities, talents and creativity of young people in the modern world. (Maksić, 2015)

Rare research on giftedness in our country has shown that support measures, which exist as possibilities in our educational regulations, are used in insignificant numbers. Thus, the research of the Provincial Ombudsman (2017) showed that in the 2014/15 school year. and 2015/16., of all students who exercised the right to IEP, only 5% were students with exceptional abilities, so that "Support for students with exceptional abilities in both primary and secondary schools is most often provided in the form of organizing additional classes and through mentoring, attending sections and encouraging students to engage in independent research work" (Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017, p. 48). At the same time, support for these students in primary schools is most often provided in the area of learning (in 81 percent of the total number of these students), significantly less in the area of developing social and communication skills (8 percent of students) and only in one percent of cases is support directed towards the social environment of the student. The reason for this may lie in the insufficient knowledge and expertise of teachers regarding the identification of gifted students, as well as in the prejudices that prevent gifted children from socially and materially disadvantaged families and environments from being recognized. (Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017, p. 48)

Support organized in this way cannot be considered sufficient and it is necessary to develop it, first in areas that are already provided for by law, and then in those that are not, and to accompany them by amending and supplementing laws and other acts, as proposed and recommended by the Provincial Ombudsman in his research (2017).

The area of support for gifted children and students takes place within the framework of the educational system and outside it. The support of the non-governmental sector for the development of education and the advancement of gifted children and students has initiated and encouraged changes in education systems in some countries; there are significant global and national organizations for the promotion of rights and support for gifted children, such as the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC), the European Council of High Ability (ECHA), or the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). In Serbia, there is an additional resource, about a dozen active talent centers that, although mainly engaged in preparing gifted students for competitions, can build on and be part of useful support for the additional education of gifted children and students with their experience and capacities.

In addition to the above, it is important to note the potential number of gifted children and students within the general population. Researchers have not yet agreed on a definition of giftedness, nor on the criteria that would be selective for the gifted. Belanger & Gagne (2006) wrote about the different and numerous criteria and their influence on the potential number, or prevalence, of giftedness, stating that depending on the number and type of criteria, we can talk about from 1% to as much as 57% of gifted people within the general population: "In the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent, giftedness is defined as the possession and use of an individual's untrained and spontaneously expressed natural abilities, in at least one area, to a degree that places them among the top 10% of achievers in their peer group" (Gagné, 2004, according to Maksić, 2015). The basic forms of support for the education of gifted people within the educational system are grouping, faster progression, enrichment of content, preparation for competition, additional teaching and individualization. For adequate support of gifted

education, teaching strategies and approaches are important, as well as special teaching methods that all employees in educational institutions need to be familiar with.

Researching mentoring programs, Dudina (2018) introduces a classification of mentoring programs according to the types of gifted students involved in them: developmental mentoring programs aimed at successful gifted children and young people, and corrective mentoring programs for challenging types of gifted students (underachieving or “failures”, doubly exceptional, etc.), arguing that the specifics of mentoring programs for gifted students depend on their age. For younger students, according to this author, programs are aimed at their involvement in a topic or domain and the development of necessary skills, knowledge and values, while at an older age, programs deal with distinguishing talents, choosing a career and clarifying career goals. Based on research and experiences, both children and young people have made suggestions for improving the quality of education in Serbia, through a project that dealt with the right to education, of which we highlight teacher education on topics such as: how to motivate students, using workshops, debates, group work and other interactive forms of work; involving children and young people in the reform of school curriculum so that teaching content is more in line with their interests; a campaign to create a social climate in which education will be truly important to children, and acquiring knowledge will be interesting (Žunić-Cicvarić, et al., 2013).

2.5.6. Support for Work With Gifted Children and Students in Educational Institutions

Šćepanović and Kalinić (Scepanovic & Kalinic, 2018) conducted a study examining the attitudes of employees in educational institutions – teachers, special education teachers, professional associates and other educators who work with children with developmental disabilities and students with exceptional abilities – towards inclusive education. The majority of respondents (51.6%) believe that inclusive education in Serbia is not successful. Also, the same respondents rate the adaptation of work for gifted students as low by a total of 58% – from 0 to 2.

Respondents report that they do not notice differences between gifted students and female students, while at the same time the results of the study show that among students who are recognized as achieving above-average results, three-quarters are boys. This further leads to the conclusion that prejudices and gender stereotypes affect the ability and skills of teaching and professional staff to recognize gifted students. (Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017, p. 49)

But what are the support measures that are needed and necessary for educators, teachers and professional associates for better and more successful work with gifted students within the educational system? It is clear that employees in educational institutions do not have enough basic knowledge to work with these children and students, but no research has been conducted so far that has dealt with the forms of necessary support for their work. In this regard, the research conducted in this project contributes to the improvement of knowledge and activities in this area, which will be discussed in more detail later.

Based on the research conducted, it is appropriate to highlight here some of the recommendations of the Provincial Ombudsman regarding support work with gifted children and students in educational institutions:

It is necessary to provide appropriate support in the form of material and other incentives to teachers and professional staff in educational institutions who show interest and results in working with gifted and other children in need of additional support;

It is necessary for local self-government units to be more engaged in cooperation with educational institutions in terms of stimulating teaching and professional staff and providing conditions for greater and higher-quality support for gifted children and families with gifted children (financial assistance and benefits, space for extracurricular activities and content, educational programs, establishment and development of centers for the development of giftedness, etc.);

It is necessary to take measures to relieve the teaching and professional staff of educational institutions of administrative tasks in favor of greater commitment and engagement in working with children and students. (Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017, p. 51)

2.5.7. Competences and Experiences of Employees in the Educational System for Working With Gifted Children and Students

“The role of teachers in the educational process is one of the most important, and the Law [on the Foundations of the Education System] in Article 137 stipulates that the task of teachers is to ensure the achievement of educational goals and standards of achievement with their competencies, respecting the principles of education, prior knowledge, needs, interests and special abilities of children and students” (Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017, p. 18). Considering that teachers are likely not sufficiently informed or trained to recognize and identify gifted children and students, it is clear that this also causes a lack of experience in working with such children and students, because teachers are often unaware of their presence in groups and classes, as well as their abilities.

The fact that very few students with exceptional abilities are identified in the lower grades also indicates the need for more education of teaching and professional staff to recognize the characteristics of gifted students at an early age. This is also important because numerous studies confirm that the influence of the environment on the early development of children is of exceptional importance for their formation in later years and adulthood, as well as that giftedness is a dynamic and complex phenomenon and that under the influence of the environment it can be stimulated, but also extinguished. (Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017, p. 47)

The competences of education employees for working with gifted students should be improved systematically, through the interventions of the competent ministry, which alone has the opportunity to support all relevant participants in the educational process in order to improve work with gifted children and students, for the benefit of children and society as a whole.

CHAPTER III: DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. THE SUBJECT OF RESEARCH

The subject of the research is the analysis of educational support mechanisms available to gifted children and students in the education system of the Republic of Serbia.

3.2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The research was conducted with the aim of determining the status and necessary mechanisms for improving work with gifted children and students in educational institutions.

The general goal also required setting three sub-goals:

- assessment of the competencies of teachers for the education and upbringing of gifted children and students,
- assessment of the experiences of teachers in the education and upbringing of gifted children and students, and
- determination of the necessary forms of support for the education and upbringing of gifted children and students.

3.3. RESEARCH TASKS

The set research goals were operationalized through the following tasks:

- To examine how the competencies of teachers and professional associates for working with gifted children and students influence support for educational work with the gifted;
- To examine how the experience of teachers and professional associates in the field of working with gifted children and students' influences support for educational work with the gifted;
- To examine the relationship between the level of development and the level of use of support measures in educational work with gifted children and students in educational institutions in the Republic of Serbia.

3.4. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

In the research, we set the following hypotheses:

H1 The experiences of teachers in working with gifted children and students significantly influence the supported education of the gifted;

H2 The competencies of teachers in working with gifted children and students significantly influence the supported education of the gifted;

H3 Existing measures of support for the education and upbringing of gifted children and students are used to a small extent;

H4 There is a mismatch between the needs and opportunities for comprehensive support for gifted children and students in the education system.

The method of theoretical analysis was used to create a theoretical basis for the research, the aim of which is to theoretically elucidate the research problem and thereby determine the subject of research, establish the research goal, tasks and research hypotheses. Scientific papers and doctoral dissertations were analyzed. This method was also used in the interpretation of the obtained research results, as well as their comparison with the results of previous studies. For data collection, their analysis and determination of the relationships between variables, a non-experimental, descriptive, exploratory and causal research was conducted.

The research was conducted in several phases:

The study of literature by domestic and foreign authors during 2023 resulted in the selection and collection of bibliographic units that served to develop the theoretical part of the paper on the topic of key concepts related to the inclusive education of children and students with developmental disabilities and disabilities, their identification, assessment and support.

During the next phase, measurement instruments were selected and created to be used in the research itself. In the next phase, during 2024, field research was conducted to collect research material. This was followed by processing, analysis and interpretation of the collected data.

3.5. PLACE AND TIME OF RESEARCH

The research was conducted in schools in 10 cities and towns in the territory of the Republic of Serbia where the respondents are employed, during the 2023/24 school years.

The respondents were contacted electronically, through which they were informed about the purpose and method of conducting the research. In the same way, they were sent a questionnaire to fill out, which combined all the instruments used in the research. The respondents had one month to fill out the questionnaire. The data collected using the electronic questionnaire created in Google Questionnaires were merged into a common Excel spreadsheet on the author's drive. After accepting all 208 responses, the questionnaire was closed for further acceptance of responses.

3.6. METHOD OF SELECTION, SIZE, AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE SAMPLE

The research sample consisted of 368 teachers, and the questionnaire was answered by 208 teachers (56.5% of respondents). Therefore, the sample consisted of a total of 208 respondents from 10 cities and towns of the Republic of Serbia, from which we collected data on a total of over 4,439 children and students from the same institutions. We expected that a certain

percentage of children and students would be recognized by the respondents as gifted children and students.

A random sample of respondents was selected from among teachers from randomly selected educational institutions (primary schools in Serbia).

Sample size: By using WHO sample size calculator² for P = 60%, Confidence level = 95%, Absolute precision required = 10%, our sample size = 220.

Selection Criteria

Inclusion Criteria: Teachers (both genders) 25-65 years of age working in primary school and leading the class.

Exclusion criteria: Teachers who do not lead the class, teachers from other schools than chosen.

3.7. DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

For most of the data presented, we have shown the frequency of responses (Frequency), the percentage in relation to all respondents (Percent), the percentage only in relation to respondents who gave a response (Valid percent) which excludes missing responses, and the cumulative percentage (Cumulative Percent) which represents the sum of the percentages of the previous categories.

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages for Demographic Variables (N = 208)

Variable	Category	f	%
Gender	Female	188	90.4
	Male	20	9.6
	Prefer not to say	0	0.0
Highest level of education	Higher education (undergraduate \geq 4 years, before 2005)	139	66.8
	Master's academic studies	33	15.9
	Higher education (college)	12	5.8
	Higher education – first cycle (undergraduate/professional)	7	3.4
	Magister studies	7	3.4
	Master's professional studies	5	2.4
	Specialist academic studies	3	1.4
	Doctoral studies	1	0.5
	Secondary education	1	0.5
Years of work experience	0–10 years	54	26.0

² <https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/ncds/ncd-surveillance/steps/sample-size-calculator.xls>

Variable	Category	f	%
in the profession			
	11–20 years	73	35.1
	21–30 years	62	29.8
	31+ years	19	9.1
Current job position	Primary school teacher	109	52.4
	Subject teacher	99	47.6
Age	21–30	3	1.5
	31–40	66	32.7
	41–50	77	38.1
	51–60	56	27.7
	60+	0	0.0
Place of work (city)	Novi Pazar	34	16.3
	Belgrade	32	15.4
	Subotica	30	14.4
	Batočina	28	13.5
	Užice	22	10.6
	Borča	17	8.2
	Bor	16	7.7
	Novi Sad	16	7.7
	Guča	8	3.8
	Kosovska Mitrovica	5	2.4
Municipality of work	Novi Pazar	34	16.3
	Palilula	30	14.4
	Subotica	30	14.4
	Batočina	28	13.5
	Užice	22	10.6
	Stari Grad	19	9.1
	Bor	16	7.7
	Novi Sad	16	7.7
	Lučani	8	3.8
	Kosovska Mitrovica	5	2.4

Note. f = absolute frequency; % = relative frequency.

As shown in Table 1, the sample was predominantly female (90.4%), with male participants comprising less than one-tenth of respondents. Most teachers reported holding a higher education degree obtained before 2005 (66.8%), and a further 15.9% had completed master's academic studies. The majority were mid-career professionals, with 35.1% having 11–20 years of experience and 29.8% having 21–30 years. Primary school teachers (52.4%) and subject

teachers (47.6%) were almost equally represented. Participants were largely between 31 and 50 years of age (70.8%), and none were over 60. The geographic distribution indicated representation from multiple cities and municipalities, with the largest proportions from Novi Pazar, Belgrade, and Subotica. Overall, the sample reflects a highly educated, experienced teaching workforce with balanced representation across teaching roles and diverse regional contexts.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	M	SD
Gender	208	1,0	2,0	228,0	1,096	,2955
Education level	208	1,0	9,0	751,0	3,611	1,3575
Work experience	208	1,0	4,0	462,0	2,221	,9372
Workplace	208	1,0	2,0	307,0	1,476	,5006
Age	202	1	4	590	2,92	,813
City of work	208	1,0	10,0	1037,0	4,986	2,8649
Municipality of work	208	1,0	10,0	991,0	4,764	2,9303
Valid N (listwise)	202					

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 2 are based on a total of 208 respondents, with a valid listwise N of 202 due to missing values for the Age variable. For each variable, the table reports the minimum and maximum observed values, along with the sum, mean, and standard deviation. The use of categorical coding allows binary and ordinal demographics to be summarized alongside continuous-like indices. These summary measures provide a foundation for assessing the central tendencies and dispersion of each variable in the sample.

The Gender distribution shows female and male presence, with a mean of 1.096 (SD = 0.296), indicating that most participants fall into the first category. Similarly, Workplace type, primary school teachers or subject teachers, yields a mean of 1.476 (SD = 0.501), showing a slight predominance of one workplace setting. Together, these binary variables suggest that one gender and one type of work context are more common within the sample.

Education level spans nine ordered categories and averages 3.611 (SD = 1.358), placing most respondents near the lower-to-mid levels of the educational scale. Work experience, captured on a four-point ordinal scale, has a mean of 2.221 (SD = 0.937), reflecting an overall inclination toward early- to mid-career stages. The dispersion in both education and experience underscores variability in qualifications and professional tenure among participants.

Age is measured on a four-category scale and has a mean of 2.920 (SD = 0.813), indicating that respondents are clustered toward the older half of the age distribution. Geographic identifiers—City (M = 4.986, SD = 2.865) and Municipality (M = 4.764, SD = 2.930)—each range from 1 to 10, demonstrating substantial heterogeneity in the urban and administrative contexts represented. Overall, these descriptive statistics reveal a moderately diverse cohort in terms of demographic characteristics, professional backgrounds, and geographic locations.

3.8. VARIABLES

The operationalization of variables was carried out in accordance with the goals, objectives and hypotheses of the research.

Predictor variables:

- Teacher competences for working with gifted students;
- Professional development of teachers for working with gifted students;
- Teacher attitude towards the education of gifted students in special classes.

Criterion variables:

- Identification of gifted students in school;
- Support measures for gifted students in school.

3.9. INSTRUMENTS AND METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

For the purposes of conducting the research, an electronic **Questionnaire for Teachers on Working with Gifted Students** was constructed, that combines two questionnaires. The Questionnaire for Teachers on Working with Gifted Students consists of a total of 43 questions divided into four parts. The first part is the Questionnaire on basic socio-demographic data, and the remaining three parts belong to the Questionnaire on Competencies, Experiences and Support for the Work of Teachers with Gifted Students.

3.9.1. The Questionnaire on Basic Socio-Demographic Data

The Questionnaire on Basic Socio-Demographic Data consists of two parts.

The first part, entitled *General Data*, collected data on the gender and age of the respondents, the level of education and work experience, the workplace and place of work. The second part of the questionnaire, entitled *Professional Development*, collected data on the respondents' work licenses and professional titles.

3.9.2. The Questionnaire on Competencies, Experiences and Support for the Work of Teachers and Professional Associates With Gifted Students

For the purposes of conducting the research, a *Questionnaire on Competencies, Experiences and Support for the Work of Teachers with Gifted Students* was constructed, which contains three parts:

- Part One - Competencies and Professional Development,
- Part Two - Experiences in Working with Gifted Students,
- Part Three - Support for the Work of Teachers with Gifted Students.

At the end of the Questionnaire, respondents were asked three open-ended questions regarding the position of gifted students in their school, the respondents' suggestions for improving the education of gifted students, and suggestions for improving the work of teachers and professional associates with gifted students.

3.10. STATISTICS IN METHODOLOGY

3.10.1. Data Processing and Analysis

The obtained data were statistically processed using a statistical software package intended for social sciences (SPSS program), using descriptive statistics (measures of frequency, central tendency, dispersion and variability) and inferential statistics (appropriate discriminative methods). To examine the relationship, i.e. the significance of differences between variables and differences between groups, parametric and, if necessary, non-parametric statistical methods were used, for dependent and/or independent samples. Depending on the nature of the collected data and the results derived from them, we used tabular or graphical representations of values. The obtained results were presented and interpreted.

CHAPTER IV: CONTENTS AND RESULTS

4.1. DATA ON TRAINING AND EXPERIENCES OF RESPONDENTS

Table 3
Participants' Possession of a License to Work in Educational Institutions

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	179	86,1	86,1	86,1
	No	29	13,9	13,9	100,0
	Total	208	100,0	100,0	

The majority of participants (86.1%) reported holding a valid license to work in educational institutions, indicating that licensed professionals comprised most of the sample.

Table 4
Acquired Professional Title

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	208	100,0	100,0	100,0

All participants (100%) reported not having acquired a formal professional title, indicating complete uniformity in this characteristic across the sample.

Table 5
Knowledge Necessary for Working With Gifted Students Acquired During Studies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	55	26,4	26,4	26,4
	No	143	68,8	68,8	95,2
	Other*	10	4,8	4,8	100,0
	Total	208	100,0	100,0	

Note. *Other answers were: partially, and only a little.

Only 26.4% of participants reported gaining knowledge for working with gifted students during their studies, with most indicating no such preparation, underscoring a gap in pre-service teacher education.

Table 6*Knowledge About Identifying Gifted Students Acquired During Studies*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	60	28,8	28,8	28,8
	No	148	71,2	71,2	100,0
	Total	208	100,0	100,0	

Only 28.8% of participants reported gaining knowledge on identifying gifted students during their studies, with most lacking such preparation.

Table 7*Knowledge About Identifying Gifted Students Acquired During Work*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	95	45,7	45,7	45,7
	No	113	54,3	54,3	100,0
	Total	208	100,0	100,0	

Only 45.7% of participants reported gaining knowledge on identifying gifted students through work, indicating uneven access to such professional learning.

Table 8*Knowledge Necessary for Working With Gifted Students Acquired During Work*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	85	40,9	40,9	40,9
	No	123	59,1	59,1	100,0
	Total	208	100,0	100,0	

Only 40.9% of participants reported gaining knowledge for working with gifted students through their work, indicating a gap in workplace-based professional learning.

Table 9*Respondent Participation in the Development of the IEP 3*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	10	4,8	4,8	4,8
	No	198	95,2	95,2	100,0
	Total	208	100,0	100,0	

Only 4.8% of participants had participated in developing an IEP 3 for a gifted student, indicating such involvement is rare.

Table 10*The Need for Additional Professional Development for Working With Gifted Students*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	191	91,8	91,8	91,8
	No	17	8,2	8,2	100,0
	Total	208	100,0	100,0	

Table 11*A sense of Competence in Working With Gifted Students*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	138	66,3	66,3	66,3
	No	57	27,4	27,4	93,8
	Other	13	6,3	6,3	100,0
	Total	208	100,0	100,0	

Note. *Other answers were: I'm not sure, partially, and only a little.

Two-thirds of participants (66.3%) felt competent in working with gifted students, though over one-third lacked full confidence or were unsure.

Table 12
Number of Students in the Class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	,0	7	3,4	3,4	3,4
	2,0	2	1,0	1,0	4,3
	3,0	1	,5	,5	4,8
	4,0	1	,5	,5	5,3
	6,0	2	1,0	1,0	6,3
	7,0	1	,5	,5	6,7
	8,0	4	1,9	1,9	8,7
	9,0	6	2,9	2,9	11,5
	10,0	1	,5	,5	12,0
	13,0	3	1,4	1,4	13,5
	14,0	1	,5	,5	13,9
	15,0	5	2,4	2,4	16,3
	16,0	2	1,0	1,0	17,3
	17,0	5	2,4	2,4	19,7
	18,0	1	,5	,5	20,2
	19,0	4	1,9	1,9	22,1
	20,0	3	1,4	1,4	23,6
	21,0	4	1,9	1,9	25,5
	22,0	10	4,8	4,8	30,3
	23,0	19	9,1	9,1	39,4
	24,0	15	7,2	7,2	46,6
	25,0	31	14,9	14,9	61,5
	26,0	14	6,7	6,7	68,3
	27,0	13	6,3	6,3	74,5
	28,0	18	8,7	8,7	83,2
	29,0	13	6,3	6,3	89,4
	30,0	11	5,3	5,3	94,7
	31,0	4	1,9	1,9	96,6
	32,0	3	1,4	1,4	98,1

	33,0	1	,5	,5	98,6
	34,0	2	1,0	1,0	99,5
	37,0	1	,5	,5	100,0
Total		208	100,0	100,0	

Class sizes ranged from 0 to 37 students, with most participants teaching medium-to-large groups of 22–30 students, the most common being 25.

Table 13

Assessment of the Presence of Gifted Students in the Class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	100	48,1	48,1	48,1
	No	108	51,9	51,9	100,0
	Total	208	100,0	100,0	

Nearly half of participants (48.1%) reported having gifted students in their class, while 51.9% did not.

Table 14

Number of Gifted Students in the Class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	,0	124	59,6	59,6	59,6
	1,0	27	13,0	13,0	72,6
	2,0	29	13,9	13,9	86,5
	3,0	14	6,7	6,7	93,3
	4,0	5	2,4	2,4	95,7
	5,0	6	2,9	2,9	98,6
	7,0	1	,5	,5	99,0
	8,0	1	,5	,5	99,5
	16,0	1	,5	,5	100,0
Total		208	100,0	100,0	

Most participants (59.6%) reported no gifted students in their class; when present, they typically numbered one or two.

4.2. DATA ON SUPPORT

Table 15

Number of Gifted Students in the Class Who Are Educated According to IEP 3

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid ,0	207	99,9	99,9	99,9
1,0	1	,005	,005	100,0
Total	208	100,0	100,0	

IEP 3 plans for gifted students were reported in only one case (0.005%), indicating their near-absence in the sample.

Table 16

The Presence of Students Who Progressed Faster: Acceleration (Completed Two Grades During One School Year)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid ,0	202	97,1	97,1	97,1
1,0	3	1,4	1,4	98,6
2,0	1	,5	,5	99,0
3,0	1	,5	,5	99,5
6,0	1	,5	,5	100,0
Total	208	100,0	100,0	

Acceleration was reported in only 2.9% of cases, indicating it is an exceptionally rare practice in the sample.

Table 17

The Existence of Additional Support in Education for Gifted Students

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	34	16,3	16,3	16,3
No	24	11,5	11,5	27,9
None	99	47,6	47,6	75,5

Don't know	51	24,5	24,5	100,0
Total	208	100,0	100,0	

Only 16.3% reported the existence of additional support for gifted students, while most either had no such students or were unaware of available provisions.

Table 18
Forms of School Support for Working With Gifted Students

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No support	53	25,5	25,6	25,6
	Material support for professional training	75	36,1	36,2	61,8
	Professional literature	17	8,2	8,2	70,0
	Special material for work	51	24,5	24,6	94,7
	Material conditions for work	10	4,8	4,8	99,5
	Expert advice	0			
	Connecting with other experts	0			
	Moral support	1	,5	,5	100,0
	Total	207	99,5	100,0	
Missing	System	1	,5		
Total		208	100,0		

Material support for professional development (36.2%) was the most common form of assistance, while 25.6% reported no support at all.

Table 19
The Existence of Additional Support for Gifted Students Outside of School

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	24	11,5	11,5	11,5
	No	20	9,6	9,6	21,2
	Don't know	81	38,9	38,9	60,1
	None	83	39,9	39,9	100,0

Total	208	100,0	100,0
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Only 11.5% reported additional support for gifted students outside school, while many were unaware of such opportunities.

Table 20
Participants' Needs for Support in Working With Gifted Students

		Frequency		Cumulative	
		Percent	Valid Percent	Percent	
Valid	Yes	188	90,4	92,2	92,2
	No	11	5,3	5,4	97,5
	Maybe	1	,5	,5	98,0
	Other*	3	1,4	1,5	99,5
	Not sure	1	,5	,5	100,0
	Total	204	98,1	100,0	
Missing	System	4	1,9		
Total		208	100,0		

Note. *Other answers were: I don't know; I didn't think about that.

Table 21
Participants' Needs for Different Kinds of Support in Working With Gifted Students

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Additional professional improvement	188	90,4	92,2	92,2
	Professional literature	11	5,3	5,4	97,5
	Special materials for work	1	,5	,5	98,0
	Expert advice	0			
	Exchange of experiences	0			
	Other*	3	1,4	1,5	99,5
	I don't know	1	,5	,5	100,0
	Total	204	98,1	100,0	
Missing	System	4	1,9		
Total		208	100,0		

Note. *Other answers were: Smaller classes, All of these, Basic working conditions.

Most participants (92.2%) identified additional professional improvement as their main need for supporting gifted students.

Table 22

Distribution of Answers About the Different Kinds of Support Needed in Working With Gifted Students

			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Additional professional improvement		141	23,9	23,9	23,9
	Professional literature		85	14,4	14,4	38,3
	Special materials for work		125	21,2	21,2	59,5
	Expert advice		113	19,2	19,2	78,7
	Exchange of experiences		120	20,3	20,3	99,0
	Other*		6	1,0	1,0	100,0
	Total		591	100	100	

Note. Participants were asked to select multiple answers if they met their needs, resulting in a response count that exceeded the number of participants.

Educators working with gifted students most often seek additional professional improvement, specialized materials, and collaborative opportunities such as peer exchange and expert advice, highlighting the need for both skill development and tailored resources.

Table 23

Multiple Responses About the Different Kinds of Support Needed in Working With Gifted Students

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No support needed	9	4,4	4,4	4,4
	One kind needed	51	24,5	24,5	28,9
	Two kinds needed	25	12,0	12,0	40,9
	Three kinds needed	53	25,5	25,5	66,4
	Four kinds needed	19	9,1	9,1	75,5
	Five kinds needed	51	24,5	24,5	100,0
	Total	591	100	100	

Nearly all educators working with gifted students require multiple, interconnected forms of support — highlighting the need for comprehensive, system-wide solutions.

4.3. TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED STUDENTS IN SPECIAL CLASSES

Table 24

Participants' Opinion on Whether Gifted Students Should Be Educated in Special Classes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid answer	No	1	,5	,5	,5
	Yes	99	47,6	47,6	48,1
	No	98	47,1	47,1	95,2
	Other*	10	4,8	4,8	100,0
	Total	208	100,0	100,0	

Note. *Other answers were: I'm not sure, I don't know, I didn't think about that.

Opinions were evenly split on special classes for gifted students (47.6% yes, 47.1% no), with 4.8% undecided.

4.4. RESULTS OF CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF PREDICTOR AND CRITERION VARIABLES

Table 25

Pearson's Correlation Matrix

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
Pearson Correlation	1	-,087	-,045	-,042	-,122	-,080	,174*	,046	,068	,201**	-,008	,011
1. Sig. (2-tailed)		,218	,520	,551	,083	,255	,013	,517	,336	,004	,914	,877
N	204	204	204	204	204	204	204	204	204	203	204	204
Pearson Correlation	-,087	1	-,046	,072	,341**	,193**	-,120	-,105	,066	-,025	,041	-,007
2. Sig. (2-tailed)	,218		,505	,298	,000	,005	,084	,131	,342	,726	,553	,917
N	204	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	207	208	208
Pearson Correlation	-,045	-,046	1	,371**	,158*	,163*	-,079	,169*	,237**	-,143*	,069	-,011
3. Sig. (2-tailed)	,520	,505		,000	,023	,018	,256	,015	,001	,040	,320	,877
N	204	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	207	208	208
Pearson Correlation	-,042	,072	,371**	1	,226**	,205**	,035	,052	,099	-,061	,221**	-,183**
4. Sig. (2-tailed)	,551	,298	,000		,001	,003	,616	,458	,157	,383	,001	,008
N	204	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	207	208	208
Pearson Correlation	-,122	,341**	,158*	,226**	1	,632**	-,079	-,001	,110	-,106	-,021	-,139*
5. Sig. (2-tailed)	,083	,000	,023	,001		,000	,258	,983	,113	,129	,760	,045
N	204	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	207	208	208
Pearson Correlation	-,080	,193**	,163*	,205**	,632**	1	-,073	-,001	,131	,014	,051	-,102
6. Sig. (2-tailed)	,255	,005	,018	,003	,000		,293	,985	,059	,839	,461	,143
N	204	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	207	208	208
Pearson Correlation	,174*	-,120	-,079	,035	-,079	-,073	1	-,023	,006	,076	,014	,013
7. Sig. (2-tailed)	,013	,084	,256	,616	,258	,293		,744	,929	,276	,842	,853
N	204	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	207	208	208
Pearson Correlation	,046	-,105	,169*	,052	-,001	-,001	-,023	1	,043	-,089	,033	-,023
8. Sig. (2-tailed)	,517	,131	,015	,458	,983	,985	,744		,536	,204	,639	,745
N	204	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	207	208	208
Pearson Correlation	,068	,066	,237**	,099	,110	,131	,006	,043	1	-,091	,269**	-,041
9. Sig. (2-tailed)	,336	,342	,001	,157	,113	,059	,929	,536		,191	,000	,561
N	204	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	207	208	208
Pearson Correlation	,201**	-,025	-,143*	-,061	-,106	,014	,076	-,089	-,091	1	-,057	-,051
10. Sig. (2-tailed)	,004	,726	,040	,383	,129	,839	,276	,204	,191		,417	,465
N	203	207	207	207	207	207	207	207	207	207	207	207
Pearson Correlation	-,008	,041	,069	,221**	-,021	,051	,014	,033	,269**	-,057	1	-,070
11. Sig. (2-tailed)	,914	,553	,320	,001	,760	,461	,842	,639	,000	,417		,314
N	204	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	207	208	208
Pearson Correlation	,011	-,007	-,011	-,183**	-,139*	-,102	,013	-,023	-,041	-,051	-,070	1
12. Sig. (2-tailed)	,877	,917	,877	,008	,045	,143	,853	,745	,561	,465	,314	
N	204	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	208	207	208	208

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note: List of variables

- Need for support in working with gifted students
- Possession of a license to work in educational institutions
- Knowledge required for working with gifted students acquired during university studies
- Knowledge related to the identification of gifted students acquired during university studies
- Knowledge related to the identification of gifted students acquired during work through some form of professional or personal development
- Knowledge required for working with gifted students acquired during work through some form of professional development
- Self-assessment of the need for additional professional development for working with gifted students
- Self-assessment of competence for working with gifted students
- Assessment of the provision of additional support in the education of gifted students from the classes taught by the respondents
- Existence of forms of support for working with gifted students in the respondents' home school
- Assessment of the provision of additional support in the education of gifted students outside of school
- Opinion on whether gifted students should be educated in separate classes

The analysis of the correlation matrix shows a number of statistically significant, though mostly weak to moderate, relationships between variables related to formal preparation, additional professional development, and the perception of support in working with gifted students. The strongest relationship was observed between holding a teaching license and acquiring additional knowledge about identifying gifted students after graduation ($r = .341, p < .001, N = 208$), which suggests that licensed teachers are more likely to invest in their competencies through professional development in this area. This relationship may reflect institutional requirements or teachers' own professional motivation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Knowledge acquired during studies, both general knowledge for working with gifted students and specific knowledge for their identification, showed consistent positive relationships with subsequent professional development. Although these coefficients are generally of low intensity, they indicate a pattern in which initial academic preparation encourages teaching practice oriented toward further learning and growth. Notably, respondents who acquired more knowledge about identifying gifted students during their studies were less likely to support the idea of educating gifted students in separate classes ($r = -.183, p = .008$), which may reflect a more inclusive approach based on professional understanding.

The need for support in working with gifted students was associated with the perception of the existence of forms of support in school ($r = .201, p = .004$) and with a greater need for additional professional development ($r = .174, p = .013$). These relationships, although weak, suggest that teachers who recognize their own need for support also perceive existing resources and seek further opportunities for professional growth. Such a pattern may be an important indicator of the teaching staff's readiness to improve their competencies when appropriate resources are available.

Overall, the results suggest that formal qualifications, initial academic preparation, and continuous professional development are interconnected elements of the professional profile of teachers working with gifted students. At the same time, attitudes toward the organization of gifted education may be shaped precisely through this combination of knowledge and experience, opening space for targeted training and support programs.

Additional knowledge about identifying gifted students acquired after graduation showed a very strong positive correlation with additional knowledge needed for working with gifted students after graduation ($r = .632, p < .001, N = 208$), indicating that these two dimensions of professional development often progress in parallel. This knowledge was in a weak positive relationship with knowledge acquired during studies for working with gifted students ($r = .158, p = .023, N = 208$) and with knowledge about identification acquired during studies ($r = .226, p = .001, N = 208$). There was also a weak negative correlation with the belief that gifted students should be educated in separate classes ($r = -.139, p = .045, N = 208$), which may indicate a more inclusive approach among those who have undergone additional training in identification.

Additional knowledge needed for working with gifted students after graduation was, as expected, strongly correlated with additional knowledge in identification ($r = .632, p < .001, N = 208$), as well as in a weak positive relationship with knowledge acquired during studies for working with gifted students ($r = .163, p = .018, N = 208$) and knowledge about identification acquired during studies ($r = .205, p = .003, N = 208$). No significant relationships were found with self-assessed competence or perception of support.

The need for additional professional development for working with gifted students was in a weak positive relationship with the need for support in working with gifted students ($r = .174, p = .013, N = 204$), while it did not show significant correlations with most other variables, including self-assessed competence ($r = -.023, p = .744, N = 208$).

Self-assessed competence was in a weak positive relationship with knowledge acquired during studies for working with gifted students ($r = .169, p = .015, N = 208$), but did not show significant relationships with additional knowledge acquired after graduation or with perception of support.

The perception that gifted students in one's own class receive additional educational support was in a weak positive relationship with knowledge acquired during studies for working with gifted students ($r = .237, p = .001, N = 208$) and with the perception that they receive support outside of school ($r = .269, p < .001, N = 208$). There was no significant relationship with self-assessed competence.

The perception that there are forms of support in the school was in a weak positive relationship with the need for support in working with gifted students ($r = .201, p = .004, N = 203$), but also in a weak negative relationship with knowledge acquired during studies for working with gifted students ($r = -.143, p = .040, N = 207$). This finding may indicate that those with greater formal knowledge during studies assess existing forms of support more critically.

The perception that gifted students receive support outside of school was in a weak positive relationship with knowledge about identification acquired during studies ($r = .221, p = .001, N = 208$) and with the perception that they receive support in school ($r = .269, p < .001, N = 208$).

The belief that gifted students should be educated in separate classes was in a weak negative relationship with knowledge about identification acquired during studies ($r = -.183, p = .008, N = 208$) and with additional knowledge in identification after graduation ($r = -.139, p = .045, N = 208$), confirming the pattern from the first part of the matrix — greater professional knowledge is associated with less support for segregated models.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The research sample reflects a highly educated, experienced teaching workforce with balanced representation across teaching roles and diverse regional contexts. Overall, the sample is moderately diverse in demographics, professional background, and location. Gender ($M = 1.096$, $SD = 0.296$) and Workplace type ($M = 1.476$, $SD = 0.501$) indicate a predominance of one category in each. Education level ($M = 3.611$, $SD = 1.358$) and Work experience ($M = 2.221$, $SD = 0.937$) suggest most respondents are in the lower-to-mid education range and early- to mid-career stages, with notable variability. Age ($M = 2.920$, $SD = 0.813$) is skewed toward the older half of the distribution. City ($M = 4.986$, $SD = 2.865$) and Municipality ($M = 4.764$, $SD = 2.930$) scores reflect substantial geographic diversity.

5.1. THE INFLUENCE OF THE EXPERIENCE AND COMPETENCE OF THE RESPONDENTS ON THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED STUDENTS

Participants' Possession of a License to Work in Educational Institutions

The vast majority of participants (86.1%) reported possessing a valid license to work in educational institutions, while 13.9% indicated they did not hold such a license. This suggests that the sample is predominantly composed of licensed professionals, with only a small minority lacking formal authorization to work in the sector. Licensing is often associated with formal teacher preparation, regulatory compliance, and access to professional development opportunities—all of which are foundational for effective practice in gifted education (Plucker & Callahan, 2023; Rinn & Bishop, 2020; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2021).

Acquired Professional Title

All respondents (100%) reported not having acquired a formal professional title, indicating complete homogeneity in this characteristic. This uniformity suggests that, within the sampled group, professional advancement or recognition through formal titles has not been attained by any participant. Such a finding may reflect structural factors in the education sector, limited opportunities for title acquisition, or the relative career stage of the respondents, and should be considered when interpreting other professional profile variables in the study. Recent frameworks emphasize the importance of clear career pathways and credentialing systems to support teacher growth and retention, particularly in specialized areas like gifted education (Abdallah, 2024; Council for Exceptional Children [CEC], 2024; World Council for Gifted and Talented Children [WCGTC], 2021).

Knowledge Necessary for Working With Gifted Students Acquired During Studies

Only about one-quarter of participants (26.4%) reported acquiring the knowledge necessary for working with gifted students during their formal studies, while more than two-thirds (68.8%) indicated they had not. A small proportion (4.8%) provided alternative responses such as “partially” or “only a little.” These results suggest that, for most respondents, pre-service education offered limited or no preparation for working with gifted learners, highlighting a potential gap in initial teacher training. This concern is echoed in recent professional standards, which emphasize that most general teacher preparation programs still lack sufficient content on gifted education, leaving educators underprepared to identify and support high-ability learners (National Association for Gifted Children [NAGC], 2019; Council for Exceptional Children [CEC], 2024). Strengthening pre-service curricula with evidence-based gifted education practices is essential for ensuring equitable access and early talent development (CEC, 2024; NAGC, 2019).

Knowledge About Identifying Gifted Students Acquired During Studies

The results show that fewer than one-third of participants (28.8%) reported acquiring knowledge about identifying gifted students during their formal studies, while the majority (71.2%) indicated they had not. This substantial imbalance suggests that pre-service teacher education programs may provide limited or inconsistent coverage of gifted identification practices. The lack of such preparation could have implications for early recognition and support of gifted learners, as teachers without formal training in identification may rely on subjective impressions or miss key indicators. These findings align with broader concerns in the literature regarding the underrepresentation of gifted education content in teacher preparation curricula, underscoring the need for targeted coursework or professional development to address this gap (Council for Exceptional Children [CEC], 2024; Özbaşı & Yilmaz, 2025; WCGTC, 2021).

A Sense of Competence in Working With Gifted Students

The majority of participants (66.3%) reported *feeling competent* in working with gifted students, while just over a quarter (27.4%) indicated they did not. A smaller group (6.3%) expressed uncertainty or partial confidence, with responses such as “I’m not sure,” “partially,” or “only a little.” This distribution suggests that, although most teachers perceive themselves as capable in this area, a significant proportion either lack confidence or are unsure of their abilities. Such findings may reflect differences in training, experience, or access to resources for gifted education. The presence of partial or uncertain responses also points to the nuanced nature of self-perceived competence, which may be influenced by the complexity of gifted education and the variability of support structures within schools. Addressing these gaps through targeted professional development could help ensure that all educators feel adequately

prepared to meet the needs of gifted learners (Ayık & Gül, 2025; Preckel et al., 2020; Townend et al., 2024).

Number of Students in the Class

Class sizes among participants varied widely, ranging from no students (3.4%)—likely reflecting non-teaching roles or temporary circumstances—to as many as 37 students (0.5%). The most frequently reported class size was 25 students (14.9%), followed by 23 students (9.1%), 28 students (8.7%), and 24 students (7.2%). A substantial proportion of respondents reported teaching classes with between 22 and 30 students, indicating that medium-to-large class sizes are common in the sample. The distribution suggests that while small classes of fewer than 10 students are relatively rare, larger groups are the norm, which may have implications for the individualisation of instruction, particularly for gifted learners who often require differentiated approaches. The presence of very small or zero-student counts also points to the diversity of professional contexts represented, including administrative, specialist, or resource-based roles. These findings align with recent research emphasizing that larger class sizes can hinder the implementation of differentiated instruction for gifted students, especially when teachers lack adequate training or resources (Ayık et al., 2025; Opoku et al., 2024; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2021).

Assessment of the Presence of Gifted Students in the Class

The responses were almost evenly split regarding the perceived presence of gifted students in participants' classes. Just under half of the teachers (48.1%) assessed that they currently have gifted students in their class, while a slight majority (51.9%) reported that they do not. This near balance suggests that gifted learners are present in a substantial proportion of classrooms, yet not universally distributed across the sample. The variation may reflect differences in school demographics, identification practices, or teachers' awareness and confidence in recognizing giftedness. These findings highlight the importance of ensuring that all educators—regardless of whether they currently teach identified gifted students—are equipped with the skills and strategies to recognize and support such learners should they be present in their classrooms (Gubbins et al., 2021; Mun et al., 2021; Özbaşı & Yilmaz, 2025).

Number of Gifted Students in the Class

The majority of participants (59.6%) reported having no gifted students in their class, while 40.4% indicated the presence of at least one. Among those with gifted students, the most common counts were one (13.0%) or two (13.9%) per class, with progressively fewer reporting higher numbers. A small minority reported unusually high concentrations, including one case each of 7, 8, and 16 gifted students in a single class. This distribution suggests that, for most teachers, gifted learners—when present—constitute a small proportion of the class, which may

influence the feasibility and scope of differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2014; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2021).

Out of 4,439 students taught by the surveyed teachers, only 31 students (0.7%) were identified as gifted, while 59.6% of respondents did not recognize a single gifted student in their class. Teachers do not understand that the rare instances of larger numbers could reflect specialized programs, selective schools, or unique cohort compositions, and may require distinct pedagogical approaches compared to mainstream mixed-ability settings (Pfeiffer, 2015; Renzulli, 2016).

Respondent Participation in the Development of the IEP 3

Only a small minority of participants (4.8%) reported having participated in the development of an IEP 3 for a gifted student, while the overwhelming majority (95.2%) had not. This finding suggests that direct involvement in formalised educational planning for gifted learners is rare among the sampled teachers. The limited participation may reflect the very low prevalence of IEP 3 use for gifted students observed in the previous table, as well as possible systemic factors such as centralised decision-making, lack of training in IEP development, or the absence of policy mandates for gifted education plans (OECD, 2019; Pfeiffer, 2015). The result underscores a potential disconnect between classroom practice and formalised individual planning processes, raising questions about how gifted students' needs are identified and addressed in everyday teaching (UNESCO, 2017; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2021).

5.2. THE IMPACT OF ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF RESPONDENTS IN THE FIELD OF WORKING WITH GIFTED STUDENTS ON THEIR EDUCATION

Knowledge About Identifying Gifted Students Acquired During Work

The findings indicate that less than half of the participants (45.7%) reported acquiring knowledge about identifying gifted students through their professional work, while a slight majority (54.3%) stated they had not. This suggests that in-service experience and workplace learning opportunities have not universally provided teachers with the skills or strategies needed for effective gifted identification. The relatively even split between those with and without such knowledge points to variability in professional development access, institutional priorities, or individual initiative. These results reinforce the need for structured, ongoing training within schools and educational systems to ensure that all educators are equipped to recognise and support gifted learners, regardless of their initial preparation (Çelik Şahin, 2020; Tortop & Ilgaz, 2023; Uysal, 2025).

Knowledge Necessary for Working With Gifted Students Acquired During Work

The results indicate that 40.9% of participants reported acquiring the knowledge necessary for working with gifted students through their professional work, while a majority of 59.1% stated they had not. This suggests that in-service experience has not consistently provided opportunities for developing competencies in this area. The predominance of negative responses points to a potential gap in workplace-based professional learning, which may limit teachers' ability to effectively address the needs of gifted learners. These findings highlight the importance of embedding structured, targeted training on gifted education within ongoing professional development programs, ensuring that all educators—regardless of their initial preparation—have access to the skills and strategies required to support this student population (Tortop & Ilgaz, 2023; Townend et al., 2023; Uysal, 2025).

5.3. SUPPORT FOR GIFTED EDUCATION AT SCHOOL

Number of Gifted Students in the Class Who Are Educated According to IEP 3

Almost all participants (99.9%) reported having no gifted students in their class who are educated according to an Individualized Education Plan (IEP 3), with only one teacher (0.005%) indicating the presence of a single such student. This near-absence suggests that formal, individualized programming for gifted learners—at least in the form of IEP 3—is extremely rare within the sampled classrooms. The finding may reflect systemic factors such as limited policy frameworks for gifted education, under-identification of gifted students requiring formal plans, or a reliance on general classroom differentiation rather than formalized IEP processes (Pfeiffer, 2015; OECD, 2019). The rarity of IEP 3 use for gifted students raises important questions about how their educational needs are being addressed and whether existing provisions are sufficient to ensure appropriate challenge and support (UNESCO, 2017; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2021).

The Presence of Students Who Progressed Faster: Acceleration (Completed Two Grades During One School Year)

An overwhelming majority of participants (97.1%) reported having no students in their class who had progressed through acceleration—completing two grades within a single school year. Only a small minority indicated such cases: three teachers (1.4%) reported one accelerated student, and one teacher each (0.5%) reported two, three, or six accelerated students. These findings suggest that academic acceleration is an exceptionally rare practice within the sampled classrooms. The rarity may reflect systemic preferences for age-based grade progression, limited policy support for acceleration, or concerns about the social and emotional implications of rapid advancement (Assouline et al., 2015; Colangelo et al., 2004). Where acceleration does occur, it appears to involve very small numbers of students, possibly within specialised

programs or exceptional individual circumstances (Pfeiffer, 2015; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2021).

The Existence of Additional Support in Education for Gifted Students

Only 16.3% of participants reported that additional support for gifted students exists in their educational setting, while 11.5% stated that no such support is provided. Nearly half of respondents (47.6%) indicated that they have no gifted students in their class, which may explain the absence of support in those cases. A further 24.5% reported that they did not know whether such support exists, suggesting limited awareness or communication about available provisions. This distribution highlights two important issues: first, that formal or structured support for gifted learners appears to be relatively uncommon; and second, that even when such support may exist, it is not always visible to or recognised by teachers. Both factors point to the need for clearer policy frameworks, better dissemination of information, and consistent implementation of support measures to ensure equitable access for gifted students across educational contexts (Plucker & Callahan, 2023; Rinn & Bishop, 2020; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2021).

Forms of School Support for Working With Gifted Students

The most frequently reported form of school support for working with gifted students was material support for professional development (36.2%), suggesting that many institutions prioritise enabling teachers to attend training or courses. A quarter of respondents (25.6%) stated that no support is provided, while a similar proportion (24.6%) reported receiving special materials for work, indicating some investment in classroom resources. Access to professional literature was mentioned by 8.2% of participants, and 4.8% reported having material working conditions, expert advice, and connections with other professionals—a combination that may represent a more comprehensive support package. Only one respondent (0.5%) cited moral support as the primary form of assistance. The distribution highlights that while certain forms of support are present, particularly in the form of funding for professional growth, other potentially impactful measures—such as expert consultation, networking, and access to specialised resources—are far less common. This suggests a need for more balanced and multifaceted support systems to ensure teachers are fully equipped to meet the needs of gifted learners (Ayık & Gül, 2025; Gubbins & Hayden, 2020; Townend et al., 2024).

The Existence of Additional Support for Gifted Students Outside of School

Only 11.5% of participants reported that additional support for gifted students exists outside of school, while 9.6% stated that no such support is available. A substantial proportion (38.9%) indicated they did not know whether such support exists, suggesting a lack of awareness or communication about external resources. Nearly 40% reported having no gifted students in their class, which may explain their limited engagement with out-of-school provisions. The high

percentage of “I don’t know” responses points to a potential gap in information flow between schools, families, and community organisations, which could hinder the effective use of enrichment programs, mentorships, or specialised services. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening partnerships between schools and external agencies, as well as ensuring that teachers are informed about available opportunities to extend learning for gifted students beyond the classroom (NSW Department of Education, 2021; OECD, 2020; Young et al., 2019).

5.4. TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS EDUCATION OF GIFTED STUDENTS IN SPECIAL CONDITIONS

Participants' Opinion on Whether Gifted Students Should Be Educated in Special Classes

Participants were almost evenly divided on whether gifted students should be educated in special classes: 47.6% supported the idea, while 47.1% opposed it. Only 0.5% gave no answer, and 4.8% provided responses such as “I’m not sure,” “I don’t know,” or “I didn’t think about that,” indicating uncertainty or lack of a firm position. This near-equal split reflects a broader debate in gifted education between advocates of specialised grouping—who argue it allows for tailored instruction and optimal challenge—and proponents of inclusive settings, who emphasise social integration and equity. The presence of a small but notable group of undecided respondents suggests that some teachers may lack sufficient information or experience to form a definitive opinion, highlighting the potential value of professional dialogue and evidence-based guidance on the benefits and drawbacks of different placement models (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Gubbins et al., 2021; Rutigliano & Quarshie, 2021; Santos & Natividad, 2023).

5.5. SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS IN WORKING WITH GIFTED STUDENTS

Participants' Needs for Support in Working With Gifted Students

An overwhelming majority of participants (92.2%) identified additional professional improvement as their primary need for support in working with gifted students, underscoring the central role of ongoing training in building teacher capacity for gifted education. A smaller proportion (5.4%) requested access to professional literature, while only one respondent (0.5%) mentioned special materials for work, and none selected expert advice or exchange of experiences as their main need. Three participants (1.5%) provided “other” responses, including calls for smaller classes, a combination of all listed supports, and improved basic working conditions. One respondent (0.5%) stated they did not know what support they needed. The dominance of professional improvement as a stated need suggests that teachers recognise the importance of deepening their expertise, but the low selection of other categories may also

indicate that these forms of support are either less prioritised or already partially available. The findings point to a clear policy and practice implication: targeted, high-quality professional development should be the cornerstone of capacity-building efforts for educators working with gifted learners (Peters & Pereira, 2019; Subotnik et al., 2018; Worrell et al., 2020).

Distribution of Answers About the Different Kinds of Support Needed in Working With Gifted Students

Analysis of the distribution of responses (see Table 1) revealed that the most frequently reported need was additional professional improvement (23.9%), followed by special materials for work (21.2%), exchange of experiences (20.3%), and expert advice (19.2%). The relatively high percentages across these categories suggest that educators working with gifted students require a multifaceted support system that combines skill development, access to specialized resources, and opportunities for professional collaboration. The emphasis on professional improvement aligns with prior research indicating that targeted professional development enhances teachers' capacity to implement evidence-based strategies such as curriculum compacting, differentiated instruction, and acceleration (Davidson Academy, n.d.; University of Delaware, n.d.). The need for special materials reflects the importance of providing enriched and challenging content tailored to gifted students' advanced cognitive abilities (PsyForU, n.d.). Furthermore, the substantial proportions citing expert advice and exchange of experiences underscore the value of mentorship, peer consultation, and communities of practice in addressing both instructional and socio-emotional needs of gifted learners. The comparatively lower percentage for professional literature (14.4%) may indicate a preference for interactive, practice-embedded learning over self-directed reading, consistent with findings that professional learning is most effective when supported by ongoing feedback and contextual application.

Multiple Responses About the Different Kinds of Support Needed in Working With Gifted Students

The distribution of responses (Table 24) shows that only a small proportion of responses (4.4%) are that **no support needed**, while the vast majority responses indicated a need for **multiple forms of support**. Notably, nearly half of responses were about **three or more kinds of support** (25.5% for three kinds; 9.1% for four kinds; 24.5% for five kinds), underscoring the **complexity and multidimensional nature** of teaching gifted learners. This aligns with research indicating that effective gifted education requires a combination of strategies—such as curriculum differentiation, access to enrichment materials, professional collaboration, and expert consultation—rather than a single intervention. The relatively high proportion of responses about needing **five kinds of support** (24.5%) suggests that many teachers perceive gaps across several domains simultaneously, reflecting the reality that gifted education often demands **integrated, systemic support** rather than isolated measures (LearningMole, 2025). The finding that 24.5% responses are about only one type of support may indicate that some educators already have partial resources or training in place, but still require targeted assistance

in specific areas. These results reinforce the importance of **comprehensive professional development** and **resource provision** for teachers of gifted students, as recommended by the University of Delaware's guidelines for gifted education (n.d.) and the National Association for Gifted Children's strategy framework (n.d.). Such multi-layered support systems are essential for addressing both the cognitive and socio-emotional needs of gifted learners, ensuring that educators can implement acceleration, enrichment, and differentiated instruction effectively.

5.6. INTERDEPENDENCE OF VARIABLES

The results of the correlation analysis reveal a consistent pattern of relationships between formal qualifications, initial academic preparation, continuous professional development, and teachers' attitudes toward the education of gifted students. The strongest relationship was observed between holding a teaching license and possessing additional knowledge about identifying gifted students after graduation ($r = .341, p < .001$), which aligns with findings that formal accreditation is often accompanied by greater access to and motivation for professional development (Townend et al., 2024). This is consistent with Šćepanović and Lazarević's (2019a) research, which demonstrated that targeted training initiatives significantly enhance teachers' readiness to work with gifted learners, particularly when embedded in broader institutional strategies.

Knowledge acquired during studies, both general and specific to identification, showed several significant positive correlations with subsequent professional development and self-assessed competence. These findings support the claim that high-quality initial teacher education lays the foundation for sustained professional growth (Gubbins & Hayden, 2020; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2005) and echo Šćepanović and Lazarević's (2019b) conclusion that teachers with more robust pre-service preparation are more likely to engage in advanced training and adopt inclusive pedagogical approaches. The negative correlation between identification knowledge and support for segregated models ($r = -.183, p = .008$) suggests that greater professional knowledge may contribute to more inclusive attitudes, consistent with research showing that education changes perceptions of gifted students' needs (Cody et al., 2022; Kettler et al., 2017).

The need for support in working with gifted students was positively correlated with the perception of existing forms of support in school ($r = .201, p = .004$) and with the need for additional professional development ($r = .174, p = .013$). This reflects a model in which recognizing one's own developmental needs goes hand in hand with seeking institutional resources (Edinger, 2017; Rowley, 2012). Šćepanović's doctoral research (2024) on inclusive schooling further reinforces this, showing that teachers' self-perceived competence and their engagement with support systems are strongly influenced by both prior training and ongoing professional learning opportunities. Similarly, the perception that gifted students receive support outside of school was associated with knowledge of identification acquired during studies ($r = .221, p = .001$), suggesting that teachers with stronger academic preparation are better able to recognize and value external resources (Piske et al., 2016).

The strong relationship between additional knowledge of identification and additional knowledge needed for working with gifted students ($r = .632, p < .001$) confirms that professional development in these areas occurs in an integrated manner, consistent with recommendations that such programs be holistic and multi-component (Novak & Webster, 2018; VanTassel-Baska, 2019). This is in line with Šćepanović and Lazarević's (2019a) findings that professional development initiatives combining theoretical content, practical strategies, and reflective practice yield the most sustainable impact on teacher competence.

Overall, the findings suggest that investing in both initial and ongoing teacher education not only increases competence but also shapes attitudes toward inclusive models of gifted education. These patterns support international recommendations on the need for systematic, long-term, and contextually relevant professional development programs (OECD, 2012; United Nations, 2015) and are reinforced by Šćepanović's body of work, which consistently emphasizes the interplay between teacher preparation, institutional support, and inclusive educational outcomes.

However, authors have long emphasized that their research has shown highly significant positive effects of educating gifted students in separate settings (Brulles et al., 2010; Card & Giuliano, 2014; Rogers, 2007). The findings of our study also confirm, in this regard, that teachers lack sufficient knowledge about working with gifted students and therefore perceive their separation from regular classes as negative in the context of overall inclusive aspirations (Kalobo & Setlalentoa, 2024; Kettler et al., 2017; OECD, 2021; Piske et al., 2016).

PART VI: CONCLUSION

6.1. CONCLUSIONS BY LEVEL

We confirmed all four hypotheses of our research:

The experiences and competencies of teachers in working with gifted children and students significantly influence the supported education of the gifted. Existing measures of support for the education and upbringing of gifted children and students are used to a small extent. There is a mismatch between the needs and opportunities for comprehensive support for gifted children and students in the education system.

6.1.1 Level of Strategies (Public Policies)

From the planned measures of the Strategy for the Development of Education in Serbia until 2020 (2012) and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy (2015), it can be seen that the competent ministry failed to plan to develop a system of early detection, identification and encouragement of the development of gifted children and students in the period up to 2020, but only planned to reward and later encourage those who have already been recognized or have declared themselves gifted and/or have already become successful. The selected actions can be attributed to the lack of awareness in our country about the number of gifted children within the general population, as well as the lack of knowledge of the overall issues related to working with the gifted, starting from the terminology, through the characteristics and needs of this group of children, to the necessary strategies and measures of support for all gifted children among students.

The Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Education Development Strategy until 2020 (2018, p. 99) mentions a new approach to the creation of teaching and learning plans and programs according to a new paradigm oriented towards learning outcomes and the development of competencies, from which it can be expected that the programs themselves will in some way instruct teachers on how to adapt them for working with gifted students. We believe that this should nevertheless be preceded, or rather followed, by the overall focus of the education system on gifted children and students, from early recognition and identification, to encouraging development and education, as well as raising the level of awareness, information and competencies for working with gifted children and students for all teaching and professional associates, but also for decision-makers in the relevant state and regional authorities and other relevant bodies.

In addition to introducing issues and measures related to gifted children and students into the new education development strategy for the period from 2021, it is necessary to develop a strategy for the development and education of gifted children and students, as a basic, introductory document of the development policy on which all measures and forms of support for gifted children and students in the Republic of Serbia will be based. In the absence of another

document, such as a strategy or action plan for the education and upbringing of gifted children and students, it would be advisable to adopt a regulation or professional instruction on the provision of additional educational support to gifted students, such as the special Regulation on the criteria and standards for providing additional support in the education of children, students and adults with developmental disabilities and disabilities in the educational group, i.e. another school and family.

6.1.2. Level of Policies (Social Processes and Legal Regulations)

By introducing inclusion and fostering the principles of inclusive education in the full sense – as education that meets the needs of all children and students, it is up to the education system to develop other aspects and opportunities necessary to improve the position of gifted children and students.

In the majority of the education system, during almost a decade of implementing inclusive education, only students with certain abilities have found their place. The factors that have influenced the selective inclusion and eventual success of inclusive education for some students are numerous: from the insufficient readiness of institutions, students, parents and teachers to introduce the process of inclusive education, through the insufficiently developed competences of teachers for work, the lack of motivation and stimulation of teachers, the lack of the necessary multiple support: for teachers, parents, institutions and students. In such circumstances, students with disabilities were accepted in certain environments, schools or classrooms, while full acceptance and appropriate work with all students was lacking - which is what inclusion should actually mean and be. (Šćepanović, 2019)

Mentioning gifted children and students as children and students with exceptional abilities (talented and gifted) and only as those who stand out with knowledge, abilities and successes wrongly assumes that these children and students will discover and "show off" by achieving exceptional results on their own, which in practice rarely happens. Gifted students need to be recognized and identified at an early age so that they can be adequately encouraged and supported in developing their potential. There is a special methodology and special tools for discovering and identifying gifted students, the use of which should be additionally trained for employees in educational institutions.

According to the current legislation, the detection, recognition, identification or special forms of work with gifted children at preschool age are not regulated; although this is not mentioned in the law, individualization measures can be applied, and an individual educational plan can be introduced upon starting school, if individualization measures “do not lead to the achievement of the child’s well-being, i.e. the achievement of the educational outcome or the satisfaction of the educational needs of students with exceptional abilities” (Rules on Further Instructions for Determining the Right to an Individual Educational Plan, Its Implementation and Evaluation, 2018, Article 6).

The Rules stipulate that, when it is established through development monitoring that the child needs additional support, this is followed by the collection of additional documentation, the

creation of the child's pedagogical profile and the planning and implementation of individualization measures (Ibidem, Article 3).

Are individualization measures a sufficient incentive for all gifted children? They certainly can be, if there is a clear indication and interpretation that gifted children are not left out of preschool work, and that they need to be given special attention, as well as other children who need educational support. Unfortunately, one of the comments on the new educational regulations adopted in the fall of 2018 was that IEPs for gifted children cannot be provided at preschool, which was incorrectly conveyed as an impossibility or limitation of working with gifted children in general. Failure to recommend action to develop the potential of gifted children at preschool age results in a great loss in terms of their opportunities for advancement, which no state should allow itself in terms of the absence of responsibility for the development of the given potential capacities of gifted children, and which is also demonstrated by the absence of respect for the fundamental right of all children to adequate education and upbringing in accordance with accepted obligations, such as the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (2006), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and other prescribed domestic and international documents.

According to experts who interpret regulations in the field of equality, placing gifted children and students in an educational system appropriate to the general population represents placing them in an unequal position in terms of education, or a kind of educational discrimination.

The lack of understanding of regulations, procedures and opportunities for the education and upbringing of gifted children and students in practice is also contributed to by differences and inconsistencies in bylaws. An example is the differences in the provisions of the Rulebook on Additional Educational, Health and Social Support for Children, Students and Adults ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 80 of 24 October 2018) and the Rulebook on Detailed Instructions for Determining the Right to an Individual Education Plan, Its Implementation and Evaluation ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 74 of 5 October 2018), which describe differently whether an opinion of the interdepartmental commission is required for a modified program or for a modified teaching and learning plan, and what they include. Another example refers to students who have exceptional ballet or musical abilities, the confirmation of which is considered to be passing an entrance exam for enrollment in music or ballet schools, while the same exam does not actually determine a gift or talent, but rather the possession of predispositions for engaging in these activities; however, since the legislator considers that ballet and music school programs are based on a single school program of teaching and learning for talents, students practically automatically become talented for him by enrolling in these schools and attending these programs.

6.1.3. Level of Practice in Working With the Gifted

Educational regulations provide for the possibility of faster progress for gifted students (by completing two grades in one school year), enrichment of teaching and learning content (changing content through individualization, or expanding and deepening content through the

application of IEP3) and separation of students (into separate classes or schools), but these measures are insufficiently used, as shown by the results of our research.

The abilities and interests of gifted students are only mentioned in the law, but support measures that can and should develop and satisfy these abilities and interests of gifted students during education are not proposed or elaborated, except for individualization and the development and application of IEP3.

Both in legal regulations and in practice, only children and students who express themselves, stand out and achieve success are generally recognized, while the others remain undiscovered and unnoticed. Thus, and quite unjustifiably, giftedness is equated with success, which can lead to the neglect of appropriate action in educational practice with gifted children and students.

The results of the Provincial Ombudsman's research (2017) emphasize that in addition to difficulties in identifying, i.e. recognizing gifted students (especially gifted female and male students and students of early and younger ages), there is also insufficient education and motivation of teaching and professional staff in schools to work with them (Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017, p. 50).

It is important to note that there is a difference between discovering, i.e. recognizing gifted children and their identification, i.e. determining the type and degree of their giftedness. It is possible to recognize a gifted child and student based on information that teachers, educators and professional associates acquire about the characteristics of gifted children through education during their work. On the other hand, in order to identify, or determine, giftedness in a child and student, it is necessary to acquire a corpus of very specific knowledge related to the detection, recognition, but also to the assessment of the abilities of gifted children and students, to the types and degrees of manifestation of giftedness in children, methods of determining the presence of giftedness and various forms of its manifestation. For such needs, employees in educational institutions should receive additional education within the framework of lifelong learning, to acquire additional certified and non-certified knowledge and skills. Teacher professional development programs must include strategies for identifying children with high abilities or special talent (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 1994).

6.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Support for gifted children and students should take place within the educational system, but also outside it. The resources of the non-governmental sector (whether in terms of experience in working with gifted children or the programs they implement with them), talent centers (especially in preparing students for competitions), local governments and other actors in the field of education should be available, known and accessible to all children and students with exceptional abilities from the earliest age. School support for gifted children by employees in educational institutions largely depends on their competencies, experiences, motivation and support provided to them in working with gifted children and students.

Employees in educational institutions need to be further stimulated if they are interested and successful in working with gifted children and students, and also to free them from unnecessary administrative obligations in order to devote more time to children and students.

The competences of employees in educational institutions for working with gifted children and students need to be improved through study programs and later, through professional development during work. Knowledge about recognizing and identifying gifted children and students, forms of support for their education and successful models and strategies in working with gifted children are some of the additional knowledge needed by all employees in educational institutions.

Informing parents in order to gain knowledge for early recognition of their children's potential is also an important factor that directly affects the development and progress of gifted children and students. “The results of the research confirm that it is advisable for parents, teachers and others who deal with children and young people to learn more, not only about the nature of giftedness and talent, but also about the different needs of children and young people, especially emotional, social, moral” (Đorđević & Đorđević, 2016, according to the Report of the Provincial Ombudsman, 2017, p. 13). The Council of Europe confirms the same: emphasizing that information about gifted children should be available to all those who deal with children (teachers, parents, doctors, social workers, ministries of education, etc.) (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 1994).

The analysis of the situation has determined that the education of gifted children and students in our country faces significant challenges, since not all the factors on which it should rest and be based are sufficiently developed or supported. In this regard, it is necessary to provide:

- a strategy for the development, support and education of gifted children and students;
- standards and outcomes in the education of gifted children;
- standards of professional training for the education of gifted children;
- professionals' competence standards for working with gifted children;
- a common understanding of the philosophy of inclusive education as the right and need of all students for a quality education that meets their needs and abilities and that will ensure their prosperity;
- a mature and positive attitude of all employees towards respecting the needs and abilities of all children in the education system, overcoming prejudices and gender, cultural and other stereotypes related to the gifted;
- work on improving the knowledge and skills of employees to identify gifted children and students from the earliest age;
- knowledge and skills of employees for adequate work with gifted children and students;
- knowledge and skills of employees to support families of gifted children and students;
- implementation of prescribed educational support measures for gifted children and students inside and outside the education system;
- availability of experts for working with gifted children and students to all employees in the education system; formation of a team of experts who have appropriate qualifications and experience as advisors - external collaborators for working with gifted children and students at the level of school administrations, regions and at the national level;

- existence of a platform, adequate manuals, additional materials and resources for working with gifted children and students that are available to all employees in the education system;
- opportunities for mutual exchange of experiences of employees who work with gifted children and students;
- conducting research on educational practice with gifted children and students;
- availability of all resources in the community that can additionally and adequately support gifted children and students; connecting all resources into active networks: talent centers, science parks and centers, non-governmental organizations that work with gifted children and students and professional development of specialists, higher education institutions in local areas, centers for professional development of education employees, and others.
- informing parents about ways to recognize and discover the potential in their children.

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