



*Gifted:
Challenge
and
Response
for
Education*

Joe Khatena

Gifted

CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE FOR EDUCATION

Joe Khatena

F. E. PEACOCK PUBLISHERS, INC.
ITASCA, ILLINOIS

Dedication

In the following lines I dedicate this book to my dear grandchildren Paul, Joshua and Jessica, and all children of the world who must strive to actualize gifted potential for transformation to eminence.

SPRING TO LIFE

The excited twitter of a bluejay
Preparing for the stir of spring,
The leaping rainbow-trout
Shivering beaded radiance,
The myriad flashings
Of a dawning day,
Autumn gold in rage promises
Icy adaptation to green,
A billion busy bees
Murmur from flower to comb:
Indomitable you struggle—
Life and conquest are yours.

Source: J. Khatena (1981). *Images of the Inward Eye: Selected Poems*. Starkville, M.S.: Allan Associates. Copyright © 1981 by Joseph Khatena. Reprinted by permission.

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F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc.
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Library of Congress
Catalog Card No. 91-61433
ISBN 0-87581-349-6
Printed in the U.S.A.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Printing
91 92 93 94 95 Year

Preface



For me, the writing of a book on the gifted has been both a delight and challenge. My first book on the subject, written more than a decade ago, deals with the gifted from the perspective of creativity. The goal of that book was to fashion a caring and nontechnical discussion of what parents and teachers can do for their creatively gifted children. I urged them to be the catalyst of the mystery and magic of existence, for it is my view that fostering the creativity of gifted children provides the foundation of a magnificent future for all.

My continued efforts to encourage the educated community to provide the best for the gifted, led to discussions of the many facets and complex nature of giftedness and to the steps we can take to maximize its fullest development. So much has been said to date by many committed to the task of discovering and facilitating the proper educational direction of gifted children that to design yet another work on superior children becomes a veritable challenge. My response to that challenge is the present book. Its intent is to put in one place, for easy access to the professional and general community, a representative sample of the most significant theory and practice on the subject of gifted education.

The book is substantial and solidly based on research and practice. It gives appropriate attention to such subjects on the gifted and talented as (1) their special abilities, (2) their developmental characteristics, (3) the problems they face and how they may be assisted to overcome them, (4) the nature of their intellectual processes, (5) methods that have been successfully tried to

nurture them towards more effective productivity, (6) various educational models designed for better learning, and (7) motivational approaches and their relevance for gifted education. In addition, there is emphasis on the need to understand gifted and talented children and to regard their education in terms of the past, present, and future.

As an unusually comprehensive treatment of diverse contributions to the field, this text captures the essences and essentials of the most innovative ideas, instructional materials, measurement approaches, theories in historical perspective, and modern technological correlates of giftedness. Rich in both psychological theory and educational philosophy and technology, this text fairly represents the many ideas and issues that have made gifted education an exciting one in recent years. In so doing it prepares the way for further advances in the field.

Each chapter of the book introduces the reader to its contents by way of an introduction and ends with a conclusion. A comprehensive list of references places the work in proper context. Apart from its function as an extensive and challenging reference to the educated and curious reader, the book is designed for graduate and undergraduate students seeking professional qualification and state certification. Furthermore, the book may be used as a text for a single course, or its components are applicable as supplementary readings in related courses.

The components of the book have been organized into a holistic model of education. The five parameters of the model consist of environment, individual, intervention, outcome, and communication. These are interconnected to the multitudinous details and complex nature of the subject of giftedness. It presents the reader with a gestalt that serves as framework for a more universal grasp and coherent understanding of the subject. In this way, it is expected that the reader will not be lost in the detail of exposition, but will experience an emergent coherent understanding of the subject. The reader will find the model illustrated and discussed in the third chapter of the book.

I am indebted to so many people who have in one way or another brought this work to fruition. Among them are my talented children and my wife, Nelly Khatena, whose creative imagination in art strengthens and refreshes me; the community of children and educators who shape my understanding of educational process and technology giving me the reason to write; and several eminent scholars, Dr. H. C. Chang of Cambridge University, the late Paul Torrance of the University of Georgia, who have served, and continue to serve, as my mentors. I am also grateful to Kathleen Ermitage and the staff at Proof Positive/Farrowlyne Associates, Inc., for editorial design and production of the text.

Let me close by wishing my readers *bon voyage*, as they recognize their own gifts and those of others in preparation for the journey of excellence designated for eminence.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Joe Khatena is professor and head of the Department of Educational Psychology and professor of psychology at Mississippi State University. He earned his B.A. and M.A. (Honors) at the University of Malaya with a major in English. He holds an M.Ed. from the University of Singapore and a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Georgia.

Dr. Khatena was a teacher in the Singapore public schools (1950–56), part-time lecturer at the University of Singapore (1965–66), and lecturer of English at the Singapore Teachers Training College (1961–65). Furthermore, he was assistant professor of psychology at East Carolina University (1968–69) before joining Marshall University where he served as associate professor (1969–72) and professor of educational foundations (1972–77).

His interest in giftedness and creativity led to the development of several measures and books related to the identification and nurture of creativity, talent, and giftedness, among which are the *Khatena-Torrance Creative Perception Inventory* (1976), *The Creatively Gifted Child: Suggestions for Parents and Teachers* (1978), *Educational Psychology of the Gifted* (1982), *Imagery and Creative Imagination* (1984), and the *Khatena-Morse Multitalent Perception Inventory* (1991). Journals which have published his works include the *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *Journal of Creative Behavior*, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *Psychological Reports*, *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, *Art Psychotherapy*, *Humanitas*, *Journal of Mental Imagery*, and *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*. Further he has lectured extensively on these subjects both nationally and internationally.

Dr. Khatena is a member of Phi Kappa Phi, Kappa Delta Phi, and the American Educational Research Association, a fellow of the American Psychological Association, a colleague of the Creative Education Foundation, and a past president of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). He is listed in many biographical works including *Men and Women of Science*, *Men of Achievement*, *International Who's Who in Education*, *Who's Who in Frontier Science and Technology*, *Who's Who in America*, *Directory of Distinguished Americans*, *the Encyclopaedia of Special Education*, and *the International Authors and Writers Who's Who*. In addition he is the recipient of several awards including the NAGC Distinguished Scholar Award and Distinguished Service Award, Distinguished Summer Lecturer of Texas Women's University, and Fulbright Senior Lecturerships to India.

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CHAPTER ONE

Ready to Take Off



INTRODUCTION

Formal schooling for the gifted is a twentieth-century phenomenon that has developed due to events of the past 30 years or so. Although there was some recognition of excellence at various times in the history of civilization, this recognition was idiosyncratic and occasional, more often occurring after than during the lifetime of the gifted individual. For the most part, those who were different or those who did not follow the norm met with resistance. Society saw the gifted as a threat to the accustomed way of life and, in defense of that life-style, would react in ways that would squelch talent. The few who recognized importance and value in sustaining talent acted as patrons or mentors, and, in so doing, supported, protected, and facilitated the emergence of numerous great works to the continued delight of the many generations that followed. There were also those less fortunate individuals who, despite the lack of patronage or mentorship, succeeded in the face of impossible odds by sheer brilliance and grit. But there were those, too, who, overcome by adverse conditions, never made their mark in this world.

There were all kinds of gifted people, but few consciously fostered and developed their talent during their formative years. The compelling urgency of these talents directed the energies of the gifted individual, allowing the talents to surface and gain some recognition. Gifted people often did not know the real reasons why they found more problems than

their fellows; they were nagged by the spirit of genius to actualize, even in the face of almost insurmountable difficulties; they prepared themselves for the eminence that was to follow; and they left behind a true wealth of accomplishment that is now ours to share. They were brilliant politicians and statespersons; eminent orators, thinkers, musicians, and artists; literary giants; engineers; inventors of excellence; and others who, by their achievements and performance, have made a difference in the lives of their fellows and in the world. They became known and recognized as gifted people, but little was known about the nature and function of giftedness, the variety of abilities related to it, or the extent to which the environment held influence over talent and its expression until the development of mental testing and the exploration of its theoretical origins.

Before being more intensely studied by Lewis M. Terman's researchers in the early years of this century, the intellectually gifted were considered something of a genetic curiosity. We now understand that the creativity of gifted and talented children is a valuable resource. Indeed, we are interested in them nowadays for precisely this reason; it is the creative potential of the gifted and talented that excites us. Their education is no longer a fringe issue. It involves the central question of whether or not our society can maximize creative performance in its adults. Not all gifted or talented children reach actualization. The task for teachers, parents, and others is to be found in the answer to the question: What kinds of parental, educational, and other interventions will promote the maximization of creativity in such children?

Yet, if we are to do what we must to bring this actualization about, we have to keep in mind that there are varieties of giftedness—intellectual and talent resources that differ markedly from those of the general population. Identifying the gifted is only the first of a number of inter-related concerns. After they have been identified, the question that springs to mind is, What do we do for the gifted now that we have begun to know who they are? It may appear that their education is of primary concern and, by and large, this must be true; so we busy ourselves planning for their formal education and deciding on suitable curriculum content and the best methodology to implement it. This is not to say that the effectiveness and significance of informal education can be omitted from consideration; to some extent, its admission as a facet of formal learning may be a key direction. The keen recognition that the gifted are highly individualistic and even idiosyncratic in their learning needs and styles must ensure a greater use of individualized learning approaches, ranging from teacher to student control. Creative learning must receive the attention it deserves, for it is the key to the development of the intellect and talent. Ferment can only preface the occurrence of eminence.

The influence of environmental factors on intellectual and creative development and the factors that hinder or facilitate giftedness must also

be of concern. To think of giftedness only in terms of those unique attributes possessed by an individual is an incomplete approach to the concept. One must take into account interactive sociocultural and economic conditions that have so much to do with the emergence of talent. It was once thought that gifted individuals were less likely to have problems than their nongifted peers, but it is now recognized that the gifted, too, have problems and are also in need of guidance. The task of nurturing the gifted is complex. What once appeared to be the responsibility of the educator must now become the concern of all. This responsibility manifests itself in more deliberate parental involvement, both personally and publicly; in legislation that has been and continues to be widely enacted in the United States; and in the efforts of national, regional, and local groups who champion and even provide opportunities for the gifted. Hopefully, all this is prologue to universal educational opportunities for the gifted and their teachers—opportunities propelled by public and private support.

ONE IN A MILLION GIFTED

Marilyn vos Savant, listed in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as having the world's highest intelligence quotient (I.Q. of 230 on the Stanford-Binet), was interviewed by the *National Forum* in 1988 about her opinions on several aspects of intelligence testing. Though not an authority on the subject, her answers to questions posed by the interviewer are of some interest to us and are presented as follows:

NF. Do you believe that our society places too much emphasis on testing for talent identification?

MVS. I believe that our society places too much emphasis on testing for talent identification, but for a reason that is not widely accepted. I suspect that "talent" may be surprisingly easy to develop in nearly all people and that we are mistakenly concentrating our efforts on locating them "after the fact." In other words, I think that perhaps the "talent" we are finding may actually be "talent achievement."

If this is true, a great disservice is being done to the large proportion of the population labelled "untalented."

NF. Do you think that I.Q. tests isolate important abilities?

MVS. I believe that I.Q. tests may isolate some important abilities, although not to the extent that the public believes. Ideally, the tests would isolate abilities to profit from the different avenues of learning, such as through language or mathematics, to name two particularly large boulevards. However, I feel that the tests lack the ability to discriminate effectively in more subtle but extremely important areas, such as insight and

intuition—the latter being not at all mystical. I suspect that good spelling, for example, may be correlated with intuition.

NF. Does it surprise you to find that often high I.Q. is not correlated with success in school or success in life?

MVS. It does not surprise me to find that a high I.Q. is not as well correlated with success in life as we might have expected, because I feel that success in life is, to a great extent, dependent upon social skills rather than on intellectual skills. Social skills are an area sadly neglected by many bright people—always to their peril. Too much time is spent with books and not enough time with people.

NF. Do you think that I.Q. test scores can be improved with study?

MVS. I'm sorry to say that I suspect I.Q. test scores can be improved with study. Many of those we consider bright are merely intellectually skilled, and vice versa.

NF. By all measures, you fit into the category of "gifted child." Do you have any special advice to give to those who would attempt to educate "gifted children"?

MVS. My advice to those who educate "gifted" children is the same as my advice to those who educate all other children, only "more so": concentrate on teaching them how to think rather than what to think. Inundating people with information doesn't help them to learn how to handle it.

NF. A lot is made of the distinction between the genetic and environmental basis of intelligence. How do you weigh in on this issue?

MVS. I don't think there is much doubt that heredity defines the parameters of our intellectual capacity. We inherited a human brain. A dog inherited a dog's brain. If you take your dog to college with you—even if he's a good student, sits in the front row, and never barks at his neighbors—he will be unable to explore the subtleties of even "The Brady Bunch." On the other hand, environmental factors weigh very heavily on whether we ever fulfill what potential we have.¹

Marilyn vos Savant, although not a professional educator or psychologist, insightfully anticipates some of the major issues that will be dealt with in this book. She contends that there is an overemphasis on the use of tests to discover talent and achievement rather than talent potential. The implication that talent, occurring after the fact, can be identified by nontest approaches reflects what E. Paul Torrance (1973) advocates about

¹From "One in a Million—An Interview with the Smartest Woman in the World," *National Forum*, LXVIII, 2, p. 17. Copyright © 1988 by *National Forum*. Reprinted by permission.