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A Programme of Supporting the Development of a Gifted Child (lessons scripts)

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A PROGRAMME OF SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GIFTED CHILD (LESSONS SCRIPTS)

1. Theoretical foundations, aims, procedures

There are differences in the definition of an exceptional ability.

The psychological criterion is based on the use of the results of psychological tests (IQ tests, special abilities, etc.).

The psycho-pedagogical criterion (more and more emphasized) refers to the achievements of a student: a gifted student is one that has profound achievements in his actions.

The most recent approach to the issue of unusual ability[1] assumes the co-existence of three elements:

1) above average ability,

2) creativity,

3) involvement in work.

Ad. 1. Above average ability stand for a high efficiency of cognitive processes (perception, thinking, speaking, memory and attention, learning) or special ability (mathematical, language, musical, arts, movement, etc.);

Ad. 2. Creativity means originality of ideas, their innovativeness. Creative thinking (contrary to convergent – where only one solution is possible) is divergent – it is based on the production of numerous elements as an answer to a problem; it is conducted according to heuristics – random clues and rules. Creative ability is connected with venturing into new, unconventional problems, openness to ambiguities, taking up risks, great sensitivity, and rich emotional reactions;

Ad. 3. Task involvement, motivation, the need for achievement decide about the direction, the relentlessness and high achievement of the gifted individuals.

Special abilities can be general or directed (specific) in character.

[1] Renzulli following A.E. Sękowski, *Osiągnięcia uczniów zdolnych*, Lublin 2000, pp. 27–29.

it is teachers that first realize the gifts of a child. Teachers' marks are most often the best indicators of student performance, especially during elementary teaching. In the younger classes the gifted students get better marks. The abilities of younger children are usually not that specified, they are revealed in the overall cognitive ability. About the twelfth year of life, directed abilities become visible[2].

the main aim of the programme was stimulation, supporting the development of (the abilities of) a child. I have adopted the psycho-pedagogical criterion in specifying ability, i.e. I rely on the teacher evaluation of a student's achievement.

I have presented the subject of abilities on meetings with teachers. I have presented the tools of recognizing abilities: the Teacher Form of Eby Recommendation and the Eby Indicator of the Behaviour that Recognize Ability[3]. On the basis of the above I asked for a ranking of students as far as the features/dimensions presented there are concerned: Ability, Task Involvement, Creativity and Perceptiveness, Activity, Reflexivity, Persistence, Independence, Direction towards an Aim, Originality, Efficiency, Self esteem, Communicating Ideas.

The people that achieve the highest scores were selected to take part in the classes. At the same time I emphasized that every willing and interested child can take part in them. The rule was that participation was voluntary.

Not every student selected by the teacher came to the classes. During the programme other people joined the group (interested in the heard news about the performed tasks). The total number of the participants was 17, 12 children came systematically.

The classes took place once a week throughout the semester, extracurricularly. They were to last one hour, but following children requests, they often lasted two hours (school or clock hours).

I chose the third year of primary school. Students at that age are past the season of adaptation to the conditions of school work and student environment. Moreover, abilities at this stage of life are still general in cognition (which I – as a psychologist can shape). At an older age, special abilities become specified. Teachers of the subject (teachers – masters) should deal with the development of these gifts using the system of the subject teaching, as well as various forms of extracurricular classes.

The stimulation of development is a multi-directional influence.

As detailed aims I adopted in the programme of my work (taking into consideration the earlier mentioned conception, the picture of ability):

1) development of cognitive ability
2) development of creative thinking
3) awakening of action motivation

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[2] See M. Witkoś, *Szczególne uzdolnienia – zarys problematyki,* "Życie Szkoły" 2001, no. 6.

[3] J.W. Eby, J.F. Smutny, *Jak kształcić uzdolnienia dzieci i młodzieży*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 104, 107.

Ad. 1. In the classed I used such intellectual functions as: deductive and inductive reasoning, verbal fluency, the capacity of memory, concentration of attention, visual and hearing perception.

Ad. 2. The main axis of the programme were first of all the exercises that develop the abilities of creative thinking. Such reasoning is a condition of achievement, self-fulfillment, preserving mental health and general very beneficial cognitive-emotional functioning.

Unfortunately, it constitutes a recently neglected sphere of human activity (both educational and extracurricular). There are few situations in everyday life, in which non-standard and original action would be appreciated and rewarded.

In the process of education it is often reconstructive and conformist behaviour that is praised, as well as the usage of strictly set procedures. It results in an attitude of waiting for standards, ready made rules, which leaves no space for own ideas and creativity.

Children had difficulties at the beginning of the classes in doing exercises that required stepping out of the set schemes. They were often helpless when faced with open tasks that refer to imagination or work in accordance with their own idea. Yet, they made progress very fast and made up for the lacks in these skills.

Ad. 3. It is hard to shape motivation directly. It was performed by awaking cognitive curiosity, the construction of tasks and organization of the classes (there are no winners, the task is interesting in itself; there is no judgment – only the consciousness that I do it for myself, not for a mark, no criticism of partial success, reducing the fear connected with social evaluation; awaking trust, sense of security, atmosphere of fun, realizing that a mistake or weakness is human, and overcoming difficulties can give satisfaction)[4].

As additional (remaining) detailed aims used the following:

4) developing social skill;
5) harmonizing the work of brain (by exercising educational Kinesiology following the method of Dennison – where by specific movements brain functions are improved, especially using the full potential of both brain hemispheres[5].

Ad. 4. A gifted child usually acts individually, separately. He or she can have difficulties in interpersonal contact.

The classes here were mostly team work (in smaller or bigger groups). They required following the earlier set rules (a contract – i.e. a collectively created, written down and signed by the students agreement). Children spontaneously supervised each other in following the rules. They learned to compromise, listen to another person, present their arguments, and to achieve final effect together. The classes also included elements of socio- and music therapy, as well as integrative games. It was important to show and name emotions, body language, etc.

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[4] E. Maksymowska, A. Wojna, *Wspieranie w rozwoju – program*, "Remedium" 1998, no. 1.

[5] See C. Hanaford, *Zmyślne ruchy*, Warszawa 1998.

Ad. 5. The intellectual functioning of a gifted child is more often then not connected with the instability of development. The exercises following the method of Dennison can stimulate and benefit to a the full development of mental functioning, improve cognitive (thinking, learning, memory and attention), perceptive, kinetic, and motivation processes, as well as the usage of the potential of both hemispheres (especially of the neglected at school right hemisphere, which conditions, among others, the synthetic and discovering ability)[6].

The conducted classes gave me a lot of satisfaction. The hard work of the children, their cognitive abilities, mutual responsibility for the process of work awoke high praise in the eyes of the author of the programme. The benefits and positive impression were most probably mutual. Children, in their final evaluation (they were asked for such on the last meeting), underlined the free, open, playful, ... and peaceful atmosphere of the classes (probably not possible on the standard school lessons), which allowed for the creation of various ideas and the deepening of emotional and social bonds among the participants (the possibility to get to know or make friends with the people with whom – as they mentioned – they had always wanted to do that; according to the author they were simply people close to them as far as their cognitive needs and emotional sensitivity is concerned: "of similar ways of thinking and feeling").

It is important that in the future the children have the possibility to develop their specific ability. The author of the programme encouraged them to use their interests and abilities in various forms (on their own or with the help of a teacher) in the following school year, in their next class, when subject teaching begins, e.g. by taking part in contests, Olimpic Competitions, additional tasks and activities, extracurricular classes and their own search (e.g. of the sources of knowledge – initially with help of the librarian, etc.), by studying the achievements and experience of specialists in a given area (by taking part in meetings, lectures, exhibitions, etc.).

Will they meet a teacher – master?... a person fascinated in his or her subject, motivating by his or her own passion to work and development of skills? – I do not know. The poor means of financing education can be an obstacle. They do not motivate teachers to such efforts.

2. Scripts of classes

The first script.

1. Greeting. Presenting the purpose and character of the meetings. Autopresentation – every child introduces themselves giving their name and surname, talks about their interests, favourite and least favourite activities (the participants say what they want or prefer to say about themselves – unforced answers).
2. Integrative games; in a circle:

[6] Comp. M. Łukasiewicz, *Sukces w szkole (booklet 1),* Poznań 1999.

– a consecutive person sys their name and then the names of the previously introducing children, the last participant has the most difficult task because he or she must without mistake give all the consecutive names of others (exercising memory, recognition);
– the second part of greetings: as an answer to e.g. "welcome all in blue trousers" everyone that fulfills this condition shouts "hi" and throw their arms above their head (finding other mutual features, e.g. the colour of eyes, favourite food, pets, etc.);
– "a mirror" – a game in pairs: slow repetition, following the movements of the person standing in front of you.

3. Writing an agreement (a contract) – the suggestions of the participants (e.g. "we help each other", "we call each other by our first name"), signing the created agreement.
4. Drawing and naming geometric figures.

Children draw and name (e.g. by approaching the blackboard – they enjoy it) known geometric figures – with more difficult shapes (parallelogram, diamond, ellipse, etc.) the teacher assists them.

Next, each child creates their own figure and gives it their own name. In the presentation they explain the chosen name.

5. Introducing the exercises from the Kinesiology theory of Dennison (alternate movenments, Coock's position).
6. Conclusion – an endeavour to complete the sentence: "I felt like...", to express own impressions, feelings.

Saying goodbye.

The second script.

1. Greeting – sharing experience; students introduce new persons (if there are such); preparing a list of participants – children themselves in an alphabetical order specify their place on the list.
2. In a circle:

– getting to know each other – everyone demonstrates with a gesture or whole body movement their favourite activity, other children guess, name the activities and everyone repeats the action;
– creating associations – every consecutive child adds a word to the word spoken by the previous person, so that a meaningful utterance, a sentence or a few sentences will be created (e.g. "at home...").

3. Brainstorm – we create a crossword puzzle (children explain what a crossword puzzle is, how words cross), so that there could be a vertical solution: the letters written down should create the word "spring" (when will spring come?, are its signs visible? – the classes began in February); volunteers write a word in agree-

ment with the group and after considering other suggestions. Describing a crossword puzzle – forming the explanations of the used words, finding their order.
4. Creating a mental map (nonlinear note taking, graphic and pictorial presentation of a content)[7] of the topic "spring" – children in groups write down all the words associated with spring. Presentation of the sets of words. Next, in each group – connecting the words following some similarities. Drawing a mental map together – defining the subordinate terms, relations; structuralism of knowledge. Justifying the words and terms used and ordered in particular surroundings.
5. In a circle – practicing the Dennison method exercises: alternate movements (precise, slow, with eyes following the movement), drawing of "lazy eights", Coock's position, as well as forming fingers into a "chimney-sweep" (difficult for many).
6. Sharing the impressions – "I felt well when...", "I liked..." (finishing the sentences basing on own feelings).

Saying goodbye.

The third script.

1. Greeting, sharing experiences and information from the day (spontaneously).
2. In a circle:

– reminding the names of all the participants (every child gives his name and all others that have presented before him);
– associations – a chain (developing divergent thinking) – another child adds to the word spoken by his predecessor a word that he associates with it (a noun).

3. Integrating game:

– children stand in the order of being born without using speech, only gesture, movement (children exchange their data, arrange among themselves the order of their positions: an endeavour to transmit information nonverbally, e.g. the order of a month and day by showing the right number of fingers);
– "a train" – using the previous arrangement (to assure random order of children), they divide into threes (by counting to three), arranging threes, one person behind the other, each three is a separate train that moves using the signals provided by the second person from the third to the first one that has, likewise the second one, their eyes closed; the third child looks and choses the route, pays attention to obstacles. The signals are transmitted by pressing the right shoulder – turn right, and left – turn left, both – stop, no signal – go straight (learning non-verbal communication, transmitting emotional support, creating the sense of security, responsibility and cooperation).

4. Children receive a set of a few dozen pictures (forty), which show various specific objects: animals, different professions, furniture, fruit, tools, music instruments, means of transport, etc. The task of the participants is to group the pictures

[7] See M. Łukasiewicz, *Sukces w szkole…*, p. 34.

using their similarities. Everyone works individually. Next, children present the results of their work, i.e. the way of classifying. We pay attention to naming the classes of the objects, brainstorm about the possible criteria of classification, we write down, add the criteria that are difficult for children.

We try to agree on a common classification, children define categories, subcategories, arrange particular names to them.

5. Associations in the form of a star (main word placed centrally – on the spreading arms there are the associated terms) – each child chooses a selected picture and tries to create as many associations as possible with the object presented in it; presentation in a circle.
6. Still in a circle – practicing the previously presented exercises of educational kinetics study (alternate movements, "lazy eights", the Coock's position), as new ones: symmetric scribble (drawing with both hands – integrating the work of both hemispheres).
7. Conclusion – "I felt bad when...", finishing the sentence, trying to name the feelings.

Saying goodbye.

The fourth script.

1. Greeting, presenting events – personal experiences of the day (any presentations).
2. In a circle:

– arranging in the alphabetical order of the first letters of the participants names, children arrange themselves, information is transmitted non-verbally (it is forbidden to communicate with words, but allowed with gesture or facial expression);
– introducing oneselves by presenting the activities that are most often performed: each child says his name, presents his activity with a gesture, names it (e.g. stroking a cat, working at a computer, etc.), all children repeat the movements; in the second part – the leader enumerates the name of any child, the participants present (together) the activity that the owner of the name presented as the favourite (practicing the skill of reenacting, recognizing, reminding, people identification, getting interested, sensitive to another human being).

3. Still working with a set of illustrations (also used in the previous meeting).

Children construct their own series of associations (linear) using any chosen illustrations (e.g. a pond – a frog – a prince, etc.). Each child works individually. Presentation of the results to the whole class. Interpretation. Building as long as possible chains of associations.

4. From the set of pictures each child chooses one (apart from people and animals), they do not show it to others – the task is to present the object with their own body, gesture, movement.

The group tries to guess which object, profession, etc. The participant presents. We check the relevance of he presentation, of guessing; the child shows the picture.

In the second part: children imagine an object themselves (first they write it on a sheet of paper), and present it with their bodies. The group makes guesses as before. Applause for the one that shows and the one that correctly recognized the object.

5. In a circle – practicing the exercises of educational kinetics study (alternate movements, "lazy eights" in various sets and dimensions: e.g. in the air, on the blackboard; Coock's position).
6. Conclusion – completing sentences "I felt well when...", "I was sad when..." (expressing emotion). Also free speeches.

Saying goodbye.

The fifth script.

1. Saying hello, sharing experience, impressions.
2. A game – opening the fist of another person (treated symbolically – opening somebody or ourselves to others): we do not talk, we do not use violence, everyone decides on their own when to open themselves/their hands.
3. We create pairs so that the companion could be a less known person (e.g. When children have not visited each other at home). Each describes to the partner what his room and the place for doing homework looks like. We encourage to pose various questions: about the colours, arrangement of elements, etc. Children know that they will have to draw their partner's room, but without asking any more questions. When pairs have the feeling that they have enough information, they split, go into different parts of the classroom and draw.

Confrontation and the description of drawings takes place in a circle. The person whose room has been drawn shows the parts accurately reflected and corrects the mistakes (praises the work of his partner). To finish with the pairs officially switch their drawings.

4. In the same or different pairs, depending on the will of children – role play, using only gesture or pantomime:

– I am comforting a friend,
– I am making a friend laugh,
– I am explaining something to a friend,
– I am inviting a friend (or other interpersonal moments, following the will of the participants and the leader).

After each role play a change of roles.

Presentation to the whole group. Children guess what were the situations about.

5. In a circle – revising the Dennison method. Practicing the worse known exercises (Cook's position, "lazy eights", symmetric scribble), introducing other symmetric movements: drawings, writings; and a new figure: "an elephant".

6. Conclusion – in pairs, as before, forming emotional communicates, nice constructive words and feelings for partners (children can express their feelings in a cozy and pleasant manner).

Saying goodbye (wishes on the approaching Easter).

The sixth script.

1. Greeting, as usual sharing the current news and experiences.
2. Developing non verbal communication. A game: A Martian and an Earthling. The Martian would like to get to know our planet in detail, collect as much information as possible from the Earthling. However, the Martian does not hear, see or speak. The Earthling can explain only using touch, leads the Martian to various places, presents various objects, their specific features, etc., thus presenting to the Martian the Earth and its inhabitants.

Then, there is a change of roles.

Sharing experience and feelings.

3. Creating an association star.

Writing in the centre of a blackboard of any word chosen by children. Every consecutive child approaches the blackboard and writes down a new word in form of a ray that is associated with the one in the centre.

The aim is to create as many rays-associations as possible.

4. Creating groups. Consequence (predicting): in groups, the participants imagine and present various situations, possibilities, answering the question, "What would happen if dogs could speak?" creating ideas and writing them on common group lists. Presenting the outcomes to the whole class. Explaining the possibly misunderstood descriptions, rewarding (each) effort with applause.
5. Expressing emotions with our body. Children create two rows; children walk between the rows one by one and present emotion specified in the instruction, e.g. "a crying girl", "a happy gentleman", etc. Next, each participant presents an individually invented figure and others guess who this is.
6. Revision and introduction of new exercises of the Dennison Whole Brain Learning Method [Kinesiology] (in a circle): Coock's position, "an elephant", "the hood of a thinker", "points to think"
7. Conclusion. Spontaneous comments of children.

Saying goodbye.

The seventh script.

1. Greeting – in a circle:

"Games to say hello":

– everyone says their name and adds an invented gesture, the group repeats as echo; all gestures and names are repeated;

– pronouncing your name with various emotions: joy, anger, calling each other (shouting your name is the most difficult task for people with emotional problems);
– rhythmical echo: each participant claps and/or stamps the rhythm created by himself, the group repeats it (practicing concentration, attention, memory, perceptiveness, sight – hearing – kinetic coordination, the sense of rhythm).

2. Various purposes. Work in small groups. "What can be the purpose of e.g. a cup (a newspaper, etc.)?" – enumerating ideas on a piece of paper, reading them to the whole class.
3. A word game. Still in groups: finding the biggest amount of words that contain some syllables e.g. "cat", "May", word clusters "nn", etc. or ten rhymes, e.g. "a shoe – a flu", etc. (then only work in pairs to individualize children's effort).
4. The leader fastens to one of the children a piece of paper with a noun spelled with capital letters and a word that describes it, e.g. "a school trip", "a gold fish", "a small scooter" or "a good man" (as more abstract), or others, according to children's suggestions. The task of every child is to guess the expression that is written on his back – based on the analogy created by other participants. Children can only use sentences that start and follow in such a way, "This thing is like... because..."
5. Revision of the Dennison Whole Brain Learning Method [Kinesiology]: alternate movements, "lazy eights" in various dimensions, "the hood of a thinker", "points to think", symmetric scribble – symmetric drawing (with both hands at the same time) of any picture (a house, a tree, a man, etc. whatever children want).
6. Conclusion, sharing impressions, both the positive and negative experiences, explaining them to each other.

Saying goodbye.

The eighth script.

1. Greeting
2. A kinetic game. The participants take various positions in the room, adapting some postures. Moreover, everyone makes up a sound that they will use. One of the children stands at the edge of the room with his eyes blinded. His task is to cross the room without bumping into the children located in many places. Children will warn about an obstacle with quiet and louder sounds, reflecting the distance of the one that is crossing the room. Led by the force and direction of the sounds he must cross the room without making physical contact.
3. Rhythmical "walking" in a circle (elements of music therapy) – clapping the rhythm with crotchets: 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, showing the stress (i.e. the first note in a time). The next child claps the length of a crotchet (counted as a "one") but depending on the adopted rhythm: every fourth in 4/4 time, every third – when 3/4, or every second – when 2/4, he claps louder and stronger, he must clearly

present the stress, i.e. the first note in a time (it is an exercise of concentration, listening and movement coordination and the sense of rhythm).
4. In a circle – we create a complete, closed chain of associations, e.g. from the word "bread" to the word "shovel" (or "the sky", "theatre", "science" – the choice is free). It is important to specify how many rings will the chain have.
5. A thousand definitions – we agree on an object that will be defined, favourably something common, known from everyday experience (e.g. a shoe, a school, a child, a hand, a leg). Next, we create an unlimited number of definitions, starting with the words: "A shoe is..." Working in a circle or in at desks with writing on sheets of paper (of the most surprising, extraordinary, etc. definitions).
6. A word game – creating as many words as possible out of the word „concentration" (in 5 minutes, or a longer time, depending on the children's needs).
7. Revision of the Dennison Whole Brain Learning Method [Kinesiology].
8. Conclusion – sharing the impressions, experiences from the classes, suggestions accompanying negative opinions.

The ninth script.
1. Greetings.
2. A kinesthetic game: "walking across a narrow path surrounded by a precipice in the mountains". Division into two groups. Each group stands at the opposite edges of a line that symbolizes the path. From opposite directions simultaneously set off two persons. Each has to cross the path. When they meet in the middle of the path they have to find such a solution that saves them from falling down (developing co-operation, mutual responsibility, predicting).
3. In pairs: children talk to each other about some positive experience (3–4 minutes). To finish with, everyone finishes a sentence on a piece of paper: "I have a friend who is...". All sheets of paper are read and put on a board. Thus, there is a list of features which characterize a true friend. Next, everyone is asked to choose from the list a few (e.g. 3) most important in their opinion features that they can also ascribe to themselves. They finish the sentence: "I am a ... friend", providing in the gaps the features from the previously prepared list. The cards are displayed on their clothes and they walk around the classroom and read each other's notes.
4. Division into two groups (e.g. By counting 1 and 2). Each group works separately. Its task is to guess, or to imagine most accurately the way that particular persons from the other team spent the previous weekend. We read out the ideas and check how many things were true (developing the ability to predict, pose hypotheses).
5. A list of attributes. Work in pairs. Distinguishing all the features of any chosen and discussed object (well known:physical, social, or symbolic, etc.), starting with the basic and defining features, finishing with the unnecessary, useless. It

should be remembered that the completing sentence is an adjective, not a noun[8] e.g. "X is pink", etc. (an example of one of children's suggestions: "A bird is curious").

6. Playing a role. Creating any groups according to children's will. Each group selects one of the suggested persons that play an important role in social life, e.g. the president of the country, city mayor, children rights spokesperson, the head of UN, etc., as ideas suggest. An expose is created (a speech, in which the character presents his views, important matters and aims, what he wants to deal with, change, repair, etc.). presentation to the whole class.
7. A revision of the technique of a mental map. Discussing the subject of "summer holiday".

Possible associations: we create a sequence of associations (linear), consisting of about twenty rings, coming back to the initial word, e.g. "the sun", "the end", etc.

8. Revision of the method of educational Kinesiology.
9. To finish with – a conclusion. Children's reflections on their own experiences, feelings (forming thoughts and feelings in a written form).

An appeal of the teacher to develop their cognitive independence, to look for the sources of knowledge, to be active in groups that develop their interests, to get involved in new additional subjects and tasks, to be creative, to make use of the help of their teachers, to take part in contests, competitions of a various level, etc.; in meetings with interesting people, lectures, etc.

Wishing success.

Saying goodbye.

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