

Investigating Science and Arts Center Parents' Awareness Related to Gifted and Talented Students¹

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Abstract:

In this research, it is aimed to investigate Science and Arts Center parents' awareness related to gifted and talented students. In this research, in the 2014-2015 academic year, the written interview form was sent to 90 Science and Arts Center parents and they were asked opinions about the foundation aims of Science and Arts Centers, types of intelligence and learning styles of the gifted students, psychological and emotional needs of gifted and talented students in which subjects parents need support and development and change of gifted and talented students after attending Science and Arts Centers. While creating open-ended questions in the written interview form, related literature was reviewed and the form was sent to an academician to increase content reliability. After making needed corrections, the interview form was finalised. The data collected by this form was analyzed by the content analysis method, and themes and sub-themes were generated. These themes were compared to an academician's themes. The findings show that Science and Arts Center parents have high level of awareness about the foundation aims of Science and Arts Centers and intelligence types and learning styles of gifted and talented children. Also, it was concluded that parents need support about their gifted and talented children.

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Key words: parents' opinions, awareness, gifted, talented, science and arts centers

INTRODUCTION

In Turkey, the formally accepted definition of gifted and talented person is as follows: “a person who demonstrates higher performance than the peers in the field of intelligence, creativity, arts, sports, leadership capacity and in special academic fields (MEB, 2009). When examining the theoretical approaches toward defining giftedness, the common emphasis about the gifted people is on the physical, mentally, socially differentiation from normal individuals.” (Akarsu, 2004: 12). Renzulli reported that gifted individuals had three elements such as having an ability above normal, a high level of commitment to the task and high level of creativity (Alkan, 2013).

These students have also been found to be more persistent in areas of interest, display developmentally-advanced memory skills and exhibit superior information processing skills relative to their non-gifted peers (VanTassel-Baska, 2003). Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that these students are not a homogeneous group and that their characteristics, abilities and needs are individualistic and varied amongst these students (Davis & Rimm, 2010; Harris & Hemmings, 2008).

Identification of gifted and talented students is closely related to the qualifications of the teachers. The parents have responsibility to observe, follow and be in collaboration with the teachers to direct and nominate correctly, for realization of this responsibility, parents awareness and knowledge level are significant. The parents should take the liability of raising their children. This responsibility gets double up when the parents have gifted and talented children, because, different features of

these special children have make the parents' approaches and attitudes different.

The gifted and talented individuals have superior characteristics than %98 of their peers, meaning that %2 of the citizens who form the basis of the society have the characteristics of the giftedness. For this reason, noticing gifted and talented children at early ages and raising them in the environment that are suitable for their talents are crucial (Levent, 2008:67). Gifted students pay more attention to mental operations because of their high level of intelligence and, consequently, their cognitive individual awareness is also higher (Narimani and Mousazadeh, 2010).

According to the declaration of child rights, the activities or actions which are related to the children conducted by governments, charities, families, administrative authorities, legislative bodies, the basic thought should be the interests of the child. The legislative regulations should be aware of the children's needs and regard the family and the environment of the child as a whole and make the quality investment (UNICEF, 2004).

The primary partners of the identified gifted and talented children' parents are the school principals and teachers. The parents should be in collaboration and harmony with the schools and teachers to serve the education according to the needs. It is significant of the parents to know and research the legal definitions in regulations and the opportunities (Levent, 2011: 98). Awareness is related to the happenings at the moment, not in the past. The individual is alive with all five sense organs to the environment and the people (Acar, 2004:9). Families have great responsibilities at this issue. They should carefully observe their children, follow their kids and share the slightest differences that they notice on their children with their teachers and experts if necessary. During the early childhood, the cognitive development of the gifted children depends on the experiences that they get in their

families. From this perspective, the awareness of the families who have a gifted child regarding gifted children's features and needs peculiar to these features facilitate the developments of the children (Özbay, 2013).

The families of the gifted and talented children should know about the features, needs, development levels, attainments to be able to provide them with a better future. In addition to this, parents should be in cooperation with the Science and Arts Centers managers, teachers and counsellors. The Science and Arts Center managers sometimes inform the parents about what is being done in these centers and how to show approach to the problems. This situation provides the starting point for organising informative seminars and providing support requested by the parents.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research is to investigate the awareness level of the Science and Arts Center parents. In order to reach this aim, the following questions were answered:

- 1) What are the demographic features of the parents who participated in this research?
- 2) What is the parents' knowledge level about the foundation aims of the Science and Arts Centers?
- 3) What do you know about the learning styles and intelligence types of your gifted and talented child?
- 4) What are gifted and talented students doing at the Science and Arts Centers with the difference of their schools?
- 5) What are the psychological and emotional needs of your gifted and talented child?
- 6) As a parent of gifted and talented child, at what points do you need support?
- 7) What changes do you observe after your child's attending the Science and Arts Centers?

- 8) What attainments have been expected after the graduation from the Science and Arts Centers? Do you think that the activities intended to achieve these attainments are carried out?

METHODOLOGY

This research has been conducted in qualitative approach. In order to find out the awareness level of the Science and Arts Center parents, content analysis which is one of the qualitative methods was used.

Study Group

The parents of gifted and talented students who attend the Science and Arts Centers in the 2014-2015 academic year constituted the study group. Homogeneous sampling method which is one of the purposeful sampling methods was used in this research. Purposeful sampling method enables in depth studies which is thought to be a rich seam of information

In this sense, purposeful sampling methods are useful to discover the events and phenomenon (Patton, 1987). Homogeneous sampling model is to constitute the sample from homogenous subgroup or situation in population (Büyüköztürk, 2012, s. 71).

The features of the study group

The demographic features of the study group are given in Table 1.

Table 1: The demographic features of the parents

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)	
Mother's Education Level	Primary-Secondary	7	15,56
	High school	14	31,11
	University	22	48,89
	Master's degree	2	4,44
	Total	45	100

Çiğdem Çelik-Şahin- Investigating Science and Arts Center Parents' Awareness Related to Gifted and Talented Students

Father's Education Level	Primary-Secondary	5	11,11
	High school	15	33,33
	University	23	51,11
	Master's degree	2	4,44
	Total	45	100
Salary (TL)	100-750	3	33,33
	751-2000	25	28,74
	2001-3500	32	36,78
	3501-5000	21	24,14
	5000 and above	9	10,34
Total	90	100	

Table 1 above shows that 7 mothers graduated from primary and secondary schools, 14 mothers from high schools, 22 mothers from university and 2 from master's degree. 5 fathers graduated from primary-secondary school, 15 from high school, 23 from university and 2 from master's degree. Of the families in the sample, 3 have salaries between 100-750 TL, 25 between 751-2000, 32 between 2001-3500 TL, 21 between 3501-5000 TL, 9 above 5000 TL.

Data Collection Tools

There were two data collection tools: The first one includes the demographic information about the participants and the second one includes open ended questions to find out the awareness level of The Science and Arts Center parents. 'Parents' Awareness Form" prepared by the researcher for the parents of the gifted children was used for this study. 'Parents' Awareness Form' is composed of 8 open ended questions. The questions were prepared by the researcher via literature scanning. For validity of the view form, in the direction of the view of an expert some changes were made and the forms were finalized. For the understandability of the data collection tools, the pilot implementation was done, and one Turkish teacher's opinions were asked about the final version of the tools.

Data Analysis

The data obtained during the research were analyzed by the content analysis method. The content analysis method is an

approach which enables verbal, written and other materials to be analyzed objectively and sistematically (Tavşancıl and Aslan, 2001). While analyzing the data, a coding process was carried out by the researcher in the direction of the idea of an expert. In the coding process, the reliability of the view form was calculated by the method of double coding of Miles and Huberman (1994). Firstly, the answers of the parents were coded by the researcher.

The content analysis method is a methodological tool and technique as a whole and usually based on deduction. It can be evaluated as an effort to comment under control (Bilgin 2003: 157). The process of the participant parents' replies for the questions on the form is to gather the similar replies together. So that, the replies in the similar content were coded. For ensuring internal validity, the obtained data and comments were shared with participants and specialists. For ensuring external validity, a detailed description was performed. By examining the consistency, internal reliability was ensured and by verification, the external reliability was ensured.

RESULTS

The results and the comments based on these results are presented in this part. The parents express different opinions on the foundation aims of the Science and Arts Centers. According to the parents, the foundation aims of these centers are; to identify the talents at early ages, educate the children in accordance with their interests and talents, provide the gifted and talented students with the opportunity of activities, raise analytical and universal thinking individuals, raise healthy and conscious generation, direct to do scientific research. But, two parents expressed that they have no idea of the foundation aims of the Science and Arts Centers.

The aims of the Science and Arts Centers are to provide the gifted and talented students to be aware of and develop

their capacity and talents. The other aims are to register the gifted and talented students, to choose the principals and teachers and provide professional opportunities for them. In this regard, it can be interpreted that most of the parents have sufficient knowledge and awareness.

Most of the participant parents are aware of the learning styles and intelligence types of the gifted and talented students. But, twenty parents express that they have no idea about the learning styles and intelligence types. Besides, none of the parents define naturalistic intelligence among their answers.

The participant parents, although they accurately define the names of the intelligence types, are all aware of the intelligence types of their children. For example, “he likes group work (social intelligence), “she likes individual work” (intrapersonal intelligence), “he likes numbers and symbols” (mathematical intelligence).

Most of the participants agree on the effectiveness of the instructional program and opportunities. In Science and Arts Centers, the activities such as learning by researching, preparing projects, supporting the learning, learning by practising, art and musical activities, higher level thinking activities, activities which support the students' horizons and self confidence are different from the ones in general education. Besides, there are writing books, information for daily life, entertaining education, laboratory studies, activities for social development, interests and abilities in the Science and Arts Centers. The parents are aware of the privileged education, physical equipments and differences in the Science and Arts Centers.

But, three parents explained that they are not conscious of and informed about educational activities in the Science and Arts Centers. One parent stated the activities are undistinguished from the general education. One parent

expressed the parents need informative seminars or meetings about these centers.

The parents emphasized that there are some needs of the gifted and talented students to be met: getting bored quickly, oversensitiveness, overemotionality, getting a hang-up about little things, ruining himself/herself in vain to find solutions for problems, being considered importance, expectation for attention, exclusion for his/her success, falling into contempt, breakoff phenomenon, motivation level, over self confidence and intimidation. Besides, parents express that the gifted and talented children needs psychological and emotional support for encouragement, gaining self confidence, adaptation, problem solving skills, conflict resolution, internal stress management, being directed correctly, perfectionism, understanding abstract subjects.

The three parents indicated that their gifted and talented child needs psychological support, but they do not know if s/he needs emotional support. 20 parents expressed that their gifted and talented children don't need any psychological support.

The parents pointed out that they observed the change after their children attend the Science and Arts Centers, these changes are awareness levels, increasing level of interests towards science, arts, creativity, self confidence and happiness. In addition to this, scrutinising, questioning, popularity, increased imagination are among the changing feelings and states.

It has been found out that parents defined the change as having different point of views, increasing knowledge on Maths and Physics, having career plans, relating cause and effect, doing research, higher motivation, self expression skills, humanist thinking, socialising after attending the Science and Arts Centers.

In contrast with these results, there are 3 parents who express no change after the Science and Arts Centers and they explained that there occurred decreasing research skills, reading habits and forgetfulness. But the number of parents who have negative opinions about The Science and Arts centers is few, so that, this can be interpreted as positively.

The participant parents in this research explained their expectancy about the attainments after the graduation from the Science and Arts Centers as developed word capacity, writing skills, increased information about history and social events, advanced level of language skills, supplied needs for career orientation and successful time management. Besides, parents added higher sense of wonder, open mindedness and being socially beneficial individuals as expected attainments.

According to the results, the parents of gifted and talented students are having difficulties. Having over confident children, hesitating about the sufficiency of the education, lack of meeting the interests and needs are among the difficulties.

Unable to assess the potentials, the lack of physically equipped schools, the teachers' not going beyond the curriculum, not being able to give convincing replies to the gifted and talented children's questions caused the parents to experience the difficulties. There was a parent who did not know his needs, and twenty parents explained that they do not have any problems and do not need any support.

DISCUSSION, RESULTS AND SUGGESTIONS

According to the research results, all the parents except two know about the foundation aims of the Science and Arts Centers. The parents have knowledge about the learning styles and intelligence types of their gifted and talented children. The naturalistic intelligence has never been mentioned among the intelligence types, this conclusion may be interpreted as none of the gifted and talented children has this type of intelligence, or

the participant parents have no idea of this intelligence type. Among the ninety participant parents, twenty explained that their gifted and talented children don't need any psychological and emotional support. This result showed that most of the gifted and talented children needed psychological and emotional support (70/90). There are some parents who are unaware of their needs, this result emphasizes there is a lack of trainings or informative seminars on the needs of the gifted and talented children.

The positive opinions were stated about the change that Science and Arts Centers' make on the gifted and talented children, but, three parents stated that they didn't observe any change. Four parents pointed out some negative changes like decreasing reading and research habits and increasing forgetfulness which led to the need of inspection of the Science and Arts Centers' effectiveness and instructional activities.

Fifteen parents informed that they did not have any idea about the attainments at Science and Arts Centers, at that point, there is a lack of knowledge about instructional objectives, attainments and there is a big need for the informative seminars for the parents of Science and Arts Centers. Twenty parents had no difficulty, the other seventy parents expressed their need for different and important subjects. According to this result, there haven't been formed any platforms for the communication and collaboration among the Counselling Service-Parents-the Science and Arts Center.

Among similar research results, Yıldız (2010) has stated that the Science and Arts Centers contributed at high level to the students' creativity, problem solving, communication skills and effective, permanent learning and served enriched learning environments. But, the same research found out that informing the parents of the Science and Arts Centers are at adequate level unlikely this research. Avcı (2005) emphasized that the awareness level of the parents of the Science and Arts Centers is at sufficient level at the research. Avcı investigated the

awareness level of 2nd and 3rd class gifted and talented students' parents. Özkan (2009) stated in her research that the Science and Arts Centers were effective organizations at climate and aim dimensions, whereas these centers were not very effective at organization level according to the teachers and principal' opinions. The Science and Arts Centers were effective at aim, process and organization levels, but not effective at climate dimension according to the parents' opinions.

The following suggestions can be offered within the scope of this study:

- The instructive seminars for the Science and Arts Center parents, so that, parents can give the right decisions about their gifted and talented children.
- The research could be made with a larger group of participants.
- Some seminars about construction and operation systems may be organized and educational opportunities might be offered at Science and Arts Centers.
- The units to support the parents of gifted and talented students on problems and difficult times may be founded by the principal.

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