

# Misunderstanding of the Gifted or Talented Child by Parents and the Public

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## Abstract

Giftedness of any child is contingent on nature and nurture. For giftedness to thrive there must be intelligence which forms its main base, these in themselves are functions of heredity, maturation and environment. The objectives of this study is to provide an analysis of who gifted children are and how they could be identified and helped, to the advantage of our ever-dynamic society. An interaction with these gifted children gives much insight into the loopholes in our society that beg for understanding and encouragement.

**Keywords:** Giftedness, Intelligence, Nature, Nurture, Deviance, Exceptional, Creativity, Intuitively, Photobiography, Disintegrating, Haggard, Metamorphosis, Heredity.

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## INTRODUCTION

Human intelligence has been categorized by nature severally. Unfortunately, not many parents or teachers are able to discern this fact easily or timely enough in order to help build up the growing child. This inadvertently, has put many children at tight corners, and sometimes left frustrated and written off by the societies they live in, over the years. Many children as well as grownups, are being misunderstood by their parents, their teachers, their families, their towns, relations, spouses, friends, bosses and even associates. Many of such individuals' actions have been mistaken for stubbornness, deviance, high handedness as well as branded names such as YTK, i.e. "You Too Know", "Over Sabi", i.e. knows more than others, etc.

Most often than not, some societies, families and few individuals are only able to recognize the exceptional nature of such persons only after they have been frustrated, destroyed, or killed. Only a negligible few are able to stand out of the crowd and are acknowledged in their life time. Many that belong to this group are in most cases ostracized, written off, banished, killed, isolated, become school dropouts, and also difficult to be brought back to the main stream after a long time, if even discovered.

For instance, Pope John Paul II had to apologize to the whole world on the 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1992 after so many centuries, for the frustration and death of one of the world's foremost scientists and philosophers, Galileo Galilei, for propounding that, the earth is spherical and revolves round another planet not vice versa, and not flat. This man was branded names and finally accused of heresy against God, and all that happened after became history.

In the light of the above, some concerted efforts are made here to understand who really these individuals are, how best to identify them ahead of time, as well as the way forward.

### **Definition of Giftedness or Talent**

Gifted from the word Gift, could readily be traced to God and the Bible. Receiving or getting of some reward one may not have worked for, or an appreciation of some effort made by another person to the performer. Though there are many and varying definitions to buttress giftedness as it affects children, care should be taken and emphasis would be on the intellectual gifts. In this situation, Gifted refers to the high mental ability of a child (Odebunmi, 1992).

Giftedness in a child or an adolescent implies or involves some psychological as well as physical predispositions, which enables him to perform in his formative as well as adulthood. A person can be gifted or talented in a number of areas such as music, art, athletics or intellectual ability. It is generally believed that everyone is gifted, but some are more gifted than others (Oladele, 1987).

This topic inevitably brings us to the definition of giftedness or talent. Nowadays, there are so many definitions of these two words but on the long run, psychologists have thought it best to use them interchangeably. A very simple one by Mba (1995), states that, giftedness and talent are innate qualities (or potentials) that may manifest in various forms in various cultures or groups. Though there are more than six or more definitions, a very brief one that helps to drive home our point is that by Witty (1959) which states that, “the gifted are those whose performance on any valuable line of human activity is consistently or repeatedly remarkable” (p. 16). Giftedness or talent could in most cases be used interchangeably. A common denominator or factor that cuts across all these words is outstanding performance. It is this feature in the child that makes him to be outstanding anywhere he finds himself.

### **Characteristics of Gifted Children**

In order to identify a gifted child, there are so many characteristics. According to Odedunmi (1992), the characteristics of the gifted child are many and can be listed as follows:

- Gifted children acquire large vocabulary very early.
- Gifted children learn to read very early and easily.
- They are capable of doing two or more things at the same time.
- Gifted children are very independent.
- Many gifted children have good sense of humour.
- They are confident and self-assured.
- They are capable of intense concentration and perseverance.
- Many gifted children are curious in nature and are therefore interested in people and things generally. They are pleasant to talk to and interesting to listen to.
- Memory is a noteworthy feature of gifted children’s abilities. They learn without prolonged drill. They are attentive and understand instructions easily. They also grasp with ease what they learn.
- They develop faster physically, than most children of their age.
- Their “whys and why fors” are unlimited as they are highly inquisitive. Those who do not understand them think they are plain naughty or being awful nuisance.

- Sometimes some gifted children have great difficulty in writing. They write slowly as their minds work faster than their hands.
- Sometimes, early physical growth that makes physical growth a reality at an early age shows so soon, e.g. the development of tooth, early talking ability, and walking.
- They possess an unusual capacity for quick sustained attention.
- They are much more capable of learning on their own (p. 193).

### **Identification of Giftedness in a Child**

It should be understood that giftedness is not synonymous with academic brilliance. There are some gifted children who are academically sound while others may be marked out through sports, music, arts and crafts. The peculiar nature of these children is that, they are easily frustrated when they are not challenged. When not quickly identified, not noticed and helped, their giftedness could be channeled to less desirable areas. Thus, many become criminals and delinquents, thereby becoming gifted negatively at killing, deceit, trick stardom (4.1.9), harlotry, promiscuity, amongst so many other vices in human beings.

The negative inclination is so possible because the exceptional skill in them is so high that, when not appropriately identified and guided, could result to accidental negative discharges which in most cases are disastrous. For instance, witchcraft in the case of third world countries and science in the case of first world countries. This is because according to Mba (1995), the creativity characteristics of these gifted or talented children involve innate curiosity about things, generation of many ideas and uncommon insights into problems. These children also are rarely afraid to take risks and to experiment with new ideas. They can improve or modify objects and systems to suit their needs or others.

Generally, they are sensitive to order and beauty. They do not like inconsistency and dishonesty. They work very hard without supervision and they do not need to be told something twice, and can even carry out the most strenuous task. They are truthful and square. They resent and regret so much when truth is misplaced and bitterly fight back when falsely accused.

### **Breaking of New Grounds Intuitively by the Gifted Child through Photobiography**

Gifted children are much more capable of learning on their own because they are capable of intense concentration and perseverance. Their ability to do two or more things at the same time is made possible through self-confidence and self-assurance embellished in a good sense of humour. Their curiosity in nature gives rise to their interest in people and things generally. This goes on to buttress the fact that parents and the society at large should allow their children experiment on viable activities. For instance, if a child is found cutting out pictures from old newspapers, magazines and discarded books and arranging them; he should be given some chance, while the concerned parent should watch out and possibly ask questions to spur him up.

Several years ago, I experimented with comparison of many faces of elderly individuals with their youthful photographs. In my inquisitive observations, I discovered a clear transition and metamorphosis of smooth, plumb and succulent youthful faces to gradually disintegrating, cranky, haggard and wrinkled looking faces. Some even suffered acute distortion due to illness or accidents. This streaming horizon of thought, motivated me to learn the art of keeping a sequential record of the metamorphosis of the human face, but I felt I have to start with myself as an example (Ganagana, 2014). I laid hands on the few I could keep with dates intuitively written

on the backs and have come up with these from class one of my secondary school days, till date. Viewed critically, one could find that, there is a marked change and variation in an individual's facial features within a period of 10 years. For instance, compare the line-up of photographs on the Fotobiography chart from 1972, 1982, 1992, 2002 to 2012. By the end of this critical observation, only a keen observer and patient individual would be able to detect the different qualities that make up for this marked difference.

An irony detected in the above scenario is the mistake many individuals make in comparing a young man or lady with the old father or mother. The observer or the judge should take up a youthful photograph of the father or mother of the same age and compare, no matter the resemblance. For instance, if the father in 1982 was a youth corper at the age of 26 years, the judge should also pick up a photograph of the boy at the age of 26 and compare accordingly. In that way, you may have judged well.

Furthermore, this assemblage of personal photographs with dates had helped some younger individuals to keep records of their own photos and also trace their parents that were my school or age mates during my secondary school days at Bomadi Grammar School in Delta State of Nigeria. Also, it has helped to make individuals not only to give captions to pictures but also dates to remember events for archival purposes. Figure 1 has details of the photographs and dates.

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# A FOTOBIOGRAPHY



1968



1969



1970



1971



1972



1973



1974



1975



1976



1977



1978



1979



1980



1981



1982



1983



1984



1985



1986



1987



1988



1989



1990



1991



1992



1993



1994



1995



1996



1997



1998



1999



2000



2001



2002



2003



2004



2005



2006



2007



2008



2009



2010



2011



2012



2013



2014

# MEMORIES OF SOME OLD STUDENTS OF ST. BRENDAN'S COLLEGE BOMADI



KELLY HOUSE 1970



CLARK HOUSE 1972



PRINCIPAL, STAFF AND STUDENTS 1970  
GOVT COLLEGE BOMADI



1973 CLARK HOUSE



1968 AFTER A FOOTBALL MATCH



1971 PRINCIPAL A. E. BAMIZA & SOME SENIOR GIRLS



UPPER NIGER STUDENTS - AGULOMA 1970



EASTER P. DAVID ORIA, CATHOLIC CHURCH BOMADI 1973



UPPER NIGER STUDENTS 1977



BISHOP KENNEDY HOUSE 1970



CULTURAL SOCIETY WITH SR. DAVID SIDIWAYI IN CHARGE 1961



UPPER NIGER 1977



BISHOP KELLY HOUSE 1967



CLARK HOUSE WITH REV. FR. PETER OKAKA 1977



DR. ODO UZERI LEVI C.O.E. PORT HARCOURT 1981



SANKANA & CLASSMATES WITH THEIR MOTHER POTCHI SANKANA 1961



SANKANA & HIS FRIEND AUGUSTINE 1975



FRIENDS SANKANA, STELLA & SANKANA 1977



SANKANA & HIS FRIEND AUGUSTINE 1981



SANKANA S. WENKADO, MASS SERVER & ALTAR IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH 1971



DR. ODO UZERI LEVI C.O.E. PORT HARCOURT 1981



REV. FR. NWANDO & VICTORIA 1977



SANKANA S. WENKADO, MASS SERVER IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH 1971



SANKANA S. WENKADO 1975



SANKANA S. WENKADO 1968 CLASSMATE

## MEMORIES OF SOME OLD STUDENTS AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

## **Uniqueness in the Gifted Child**

Although almost all the characteristics of gifted child have been enumerated above, at a glance, a careful observer would surely be surprised at the following: Gifted children set and maintain high standards for themselves and dislike routine tasks, although, they have the power of sustained attention in a subject of interest to them. They often learn by seemingly unusual methods and are very resourceful. They have superior ability to reasoning, analyzing and organizing. They learn very rapidly and remember what they have learnt. They love books and are curious about things around them. Finally, they are interested in cause and effect relationships and manifest this in making reasonable generalizations about events, people or things in general. They are masters of stories, because they hardly forget. They are in most cases seen playing the leadership role unconsciously. A very good way to experiment this is by giving a group assignment to children including the one with such traits without appointing a leader. After several hours, a leader gradually emerges and this may be the one with such traits as the gifted child amongst them.

## **The Formative Age of Children: A Veritable Recipe**

This is the most important and also the most delicate age of the child in his upbringing to the level of a complete human being. The formative age of any child ranges from day one to the end of five years. This is known as the photographic, decisive and determinant age of any child. Unfortunately, many parents are not aware of this and so do not take care. This age is referred to as neonatal phase or better still, the cradle state. At this stage of development, a child experiences physical, social and emotional changes. This would be incomplete without the psychological implications.

A child of this age bracket copies whatever the parents, siblings and any member of the immediate family does. The child gradually sees and knows the authority of the father and the roles of both parents in the house and the environment. Such a child always looks intently at persons in the face as well as observes those that visit the family, and whatever transactions they have with the family. This situation of the child could be likened to that of a dog, as he cannot talk at the early stage. The child only manages to smile and cry as his main mediums of communication. For any parent to have a very good and successful child, at the child's later age, all efforts must be made to make sure that all the qualities they need in him should be inculcated in him now. A very good knowledge and implementation of the formative age principles in children could be referred to as a very sure solution and hope of willing and ready-to-work parents. Many parents the world over, just dabbled into parenthood, without getting acquainted with child development principles. This has invariably contributed to the innumerable problems in society brought about by broken homes, single parenthood and offsprings of motherless and fatherless homes.

## **Is Giftedness Hereditary or Acquired?**

Giftedness is both hereditary as well as acquired. In other words, about 85% of it is from the parents while the rest is from nurture. That from the environment the child finds himself is known as nurture.

Giftedness, which is a direct offshoot of intelligence had long been pointed out by psychologists that, it is a function of heredity, maturation and environment. In other words, a large part of an individual's general intelligence is inherited from his parent (or grandparent). This, it is said, further develops as the child grows if the environment will further enhance the development of his general ability.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let us bear in mind and also owing allegiance to Mba (1995), that, some psychologists have called attention to the fact that, the concept of giftedness (or talent) is only meaningful when it relates to a particular culture and the level of attainment of desirable values by individuals in that culture. Simply put, it means that, charity begins at home. Let us encourage our children and youths by not being over-zealous and strict. Always learn to give a listening ear to what your child or ward must be saying verbally or through body language. For instance, I did not like my elder brother's approach to his barbing of our (my) hairs, when three of us (younger brothers) were staying with him in the early sixties, but I could not protest. Later, he stopped as he saw distress expressed in my face severally, but I was already in secondary school class four. Since then, I started maintaining big hair style till date. Take a look at this picture – photograph of (myself, from 1968 to 2014).

Therefore, parents do not be too strict or too lenient with your children henceforth, but help to observe them keenly and give them chance to experiment on their ideas. Do not ever under-rate or sweep their ideas under the carpet.

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