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TYPES OF SUPPORT GIFTED STUDENTS RECEIVE IN SCHOOL

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Abstract. *This paper is oriented towards the attitudes of the teachers and the gifted student parents on types of support gifted students receive in school in addition to extra classes, as well as towards parents' attitudes on acceleration and special programs as forms of support for gifted students. Consequently, the goal of this paper is to find out: (1) teachers' attitudes on types of support gifted students receive in school in addition to extra classes; (2) parents' attitudes on types of support gifted students receive in school in addition to extra classes; (3) parents' views on acceleration and special programs for the gifted students. The research involved 104 teachers and 30 parents of gifted students from multiple elementary and middle schools situated in Niš and Knjaževac. The instrument used to collect teachers' attitudes is a mixed questionnaire, whereas the gifted student parents' opinions and attitudes have been collected through the leading structured interview. Thus, the quantity data processing is based on the descriptive statistics, while the quality data, given in the narrative form, has been processed through the thematic content analysis, with the coding of key ideas into groups (units) with a common meaning. The findings of this research have shown that besides extra classes, schools organize other activities as well in order to encourage and stimulate giftedness in students, and the most common forms of support to the gifted students are: participation in contests and competitions, being part of extra classes and project groups, participation in cultural and social events, and rewarding. This study has also found that parents support the acceleration and special programs for gifted students, with a slight concern about separating a child from his/her peers.*

Key words: *giftedness, types of support, acceleration, student groups, school*

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1. ENCOURAGING GIFTEDNESS IN SCHOOL

The process of identifying and encouraging gifted students, as well as the systematic approach to education of gifted students in Serbia became more robust in the 1960's and 1970's when schools became to require the organization of special types of classes for these students (Radomirović, 2013). Ways to encourage gifted students: (1) acceleration; (2) enriching the curriculum, extra classes; (3) separating or grouping students within or outside the class after school (Avramović & Vujačić, 2009) are regulated by law (Grandić & Letić, 2009), however, schools and teachers are not obligated to encourage gifted students to advance faster, but the whole educational support is rather based on the idea of their specific educational needs (Arsić & Vučinić, 2013). In addition to the abovementioned types of support, students' giftedness can also be encouraged in regular classes, during extracurricular activities, as well as through cooperation with extracurricular institutions and individuals dealing with science, arts and sports (Janković & Rodić, 2007). According to the research which studied the ways to encourage giftedness (Muratović & Musić, 2017), gifted students are encouraged when worked with in small groups, during extracurricular activities, extra classes, with individualized approach, through enrichment and expansion of the curriculum, through mentoring, identification and acceleration, while extra classes and extracurricular activities proven to be the most prevalent ones.

1.1. Acceleration

The term "acceleration" is used to refer to a variety of practices that increase the rate or level of learning for students who learn more quickly or have more advanced levels of understanding than those expected for students in their grade (Kanevsky & Clelland, 2013). The main idea of acceleration is reflected in the ability of some students to progress faster through the grades. Moreover, acceleration can also be achieved by starting school a year earlier or by focusing only on one area of study and mastering it more quickly (for example: mathematics, art) (Karijašević, 2013). Acceleration can be: (1) content-based where gifted students remain with peers of the same age and grade for most of the school day but receive higher grade-level instruction in an advanced grade; or students could work on higher grade-level instruction in his/her regular classroom, (2) grade-based, which shortens the number of years a student remains in school (early entrance to school, "grade skipping", grade telescoping, early entrance to college (Colangelo et al., 2010). Thanks to the flexible pacing options, acceleration manages to accommodate individual differences in students' rates of learning and development, while students are provided with continuous opportunities to enhance their competence at a rate and level responsive to individual readiness (Kanevsky & Clelland, 2013), which also solves the problem of unnecessary repetition of learning contents which the student is already familiar with, that is, student can be involved in the learning process from the level which he is already at. However, acceleration can have some negative consequences, such as problems in adaptation of gifted students and friend-related problems, because skipping a grade can lead to a possible loss of old friends, which can result in the difficult psychosocial advancement of gifted students (Muratović & Musić, 2017). A research on acceleration (Hoogeveen, Van Hell & Verhoeven, 2005) showed that even though teachers had positive experience with acceleration, they appeared to be most concerned with the isolation of accelerated students, and also expressed worries about their social competence and the development of emotional problems.

1.2. Enrichment of the regular curriculum – course materials, extra classes

Enrichment is most often related to additional engagement of students, both in the classroom and outside of it, usually through extra classes, project groups, participation in contests and competitions, working with a mentor, independent learning, etc. or by providing more complex content in regular classes (Karijašević, 2013). Educational system in our country recognizes extra classes as the most common form of work with gifted students, which is seen as the educational influence that most of the gifted students encounter first. The purpose of extra classes is to encourage the development of competences in gifted students based on their needs and interests, and through enrichment and expansion of course materials for the topics they are interested in (Miljanović & Topić, 2010) which includes the perception of cause-and-effect relationships, the perception of relations between things and phenomena, searching for root causes, finding new and different solutions (Karijašević, 2013). In parallel with knowledge deepening, students also develop and advance in accordance with their individual abilities and needs (Hebib & Spasenović, 2011). Individualization is also enhanced due to the fact that teaching materials for extra classes are created with mutual agreement between the teacher and student, respecting the wishes and interests of the student. It is recommended to use problem-solving methods during extra classes, as well as discovery learning (inquiry-based learning) and other methods that help trigger student's thought, since extra classes by nature imply setting high goals (Vilotijević, 1999).

One of the curriculum enrichment models was developed by Renzulli (2005) who believes that the goal of enrichment is to give gifted students freedom to explore problems of personal interest and to allow them to choose how broad and deep they will go. He called it *The Enrichment Triad Model* which implies that students go through three levels or types of enriched activities: (1) general exploratory activities, where students are exposed to topics that are not a normal part of the school's curriculum; (2) group training activities which encourage analytical, creative and critical thinking, positive image of oneself, system of values, motivation and research skills; (3) investigations of real problems gifted students are interested in. The first two levels are intended for all students, although they are of greater importance to the gifted. These two stages prepare the students for inclusion in the third level activities (Pejić, Tuhtan-Maras & Arrigoni, 2007).

1.3. Grouping students by ability

This form of motivation of gifted students was created with the aim of providing adequate support to gifted students in the classroom, based on their individual needs and competences. One of the first attempts to group students by ability is the Mannheim system, where students were put into different classes: class for gifted students, class for average students who for some reason fall behind, and below average students (students with reduced intellectual ability) (Muratović & Musić, 2017). According to Karijašević (2013), grouping students in primary schools can be done through special courses, that is, programs which include students from regular classes, and through cluster grouping by activity which implies clustering students based on their common learning needs (Brody, 2004). Grouping can be done in various ways: specialized schools, special award classes for students who excel; grouping students within their regular classroom (within-class); courses and seminars, learning centers with special sources, specialized extra-curricular

activities, summer programs, extended programs within a community (Karijašević, 2013).

The results of the studies on curricula that require ability grouping of students show that the effects of the grouping depend on the grouping program. Multi-level classes is the practice of dividing students of the same grade into groups based on ability (high, medium, low), where teaching takes place in different classrooms during the entire day or during certain courses. These classes require minimum adjustment of the curriculum and have little or no effect on students' advancement. Programs that require more substantial curriculum adaptation, such as cross-grade grouping and within-class grouping have more positive effects. Enrichment and acceleration programs which require the highest degree of curriculum adjustment have the biggest impact on students' knowledge (Kulik & Kulik, 1992).

Being an environment rich in diverse, both teaching and extracurricular activities, school provides various opportunities to motivate, encourage and develop gifted students.

Extra classes represent an important way of encouraging gifted students in schools, but it is not enough to motivate gifted students only through extra classes. Since students can show giftedness in different fields and areas and can require special treatment and teaching methods beyond the limits of extra classes, both in school and outside of school, through collaboration with institutions and significant individuals, there are numerous opportunities for working with gifted students.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper is oriented towards the attitudes of the teachers and the gifted student parents on types of support gifted students receive in school in addition to extra classes, as well as towards parents' attitudes on acceleration and special programs as forms of support for gifted students. Consequently, the goal of this paper is to find out: (1) teachers' attitudes on types of support gifted students receive in school in addition to extra classes (considering the type of school teachers work in and their scientific field); (2) parents' attitudes on types of support gifted students receive in school in addition to extra classes (considering child's current level of education and parents' educational degree); (3) parents' views on acceleration and special programs for the gifted students (considering child's current level of education and parents' educational degree).

The research is based on the descriptive method and the interview and survey techniques. The instrument used to collect teachers' attitudes is a mixed questionnaire, whereas the gifted student parents' opinions and attitudes have been collected through the leading structured interview. Thus, the quantity data processing is based on the descriptive statistics (M, SD, χ^2, p, %), while the quality data, given in the narrative form, has been processed through the thematic content analysis, with the coding of key ideas into groups (units) with a common meaning.

The research involved 104 teachers and 30 parents of gifted students: 46 teachers from elementary schools "Učitelj Tasa" and "Njegoš" in Niš; "Dubrava" and "Dimitrije Todorović Kaplar" in Knjaževac and 58 teachers from middle schools "Bora Stanković" and "Stevan Sremac" in Niš and "Tehnička škola" in Knjaževac. The sample structure in relation to the studied variables is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Sample structure

Teachers			Parents		
School	N	%	Educational Degree	N	%
Elementary School	46	44.2	Elementary School Degree	4	13.3
High School	58	55.8	High School Degree	9	30.0
			Associate/Bachelor Degree	17	56.7
Total	104	100	Total	30	100.00
Scientific field	N	%	Child's current level of education	N	%
Natural sciences	56	53.8	Elementary School	9	30.0
Social sciences	48	46.2	Middle School	21	70.0
Total	104	100.0	Total	30	100.0

As seen in Table 1, both groups of respondents mostly involved teachers and parents of high school students (teachers: 55.8% versus 44.2%, and parents: 70% versus 30%) the reason being that special programs for gifted students mostly exist in high schools.

The research involved 56.7% (17) parents with associate/bachelor degree, 30% (9) parents with high school degree and 13. 3% (4) parents with elementary school degree. Considering the teachers' scientific field, 53.8% natural sciences teachers and 46.2% social sciences teachers were involved in the research.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Ways to support giftedness in school besides extra classes

Table 2 Types of support gifted students receive in addition to extra classes from the perspective of teachers

				M	SD
Types of support gifted students receive in addition to extra classes	Competitions and contests	N	15	3.298	1.582
		%	14.4		
	Project groups	N	31		
		%	29.8		
	Cultural and social activities and events	N	8		
		%	7.7		
	Prizes and rewards	N	8		
		%	7.7		
	Other	N	42		
		%	40.4		

Based on the responses given by teachers regarding types of motivation gifted students should receive in addition to extra classes, the following categories were created:

(1) Competitions and contests (14.4%). Regardless of the fact that extra classes are most frequently used to prepare students for competitions and contests, teachers single out this form of motivation as a separate one. This kind of teachers' opinion is quite justified since some of the characteristics of gifted students is striving for affirmation, overcoming obstacles and challenges, affirmation and self-affirmation, which can be satisfied through participation in competitions, quizzes and contests.

(2) Project groups (29.8%) are an opportunity for the gifted students to express their creativity, the research spirit, to present their suggestions and ideas, and to carry them out, as well as the opportunity for gifted students to meet their own needs by engaging in the activities which they are interested in.

(3) Cultural and social activities and events (7.7%) which allow gifted children to manifest their preference for artwork, that is, to develop their giftedness in acting, singing, drawing, painting, dancing, etc. Teachers provided the following examples: performances, recitals, and shows, day of languages, day of science, cooperation with their peers in other countries, cooperation with other schools or the local community, with cultural institutions, social activities in school, choir and orchestra.

(4) Prizes and rewards (7.7%) which recognize and provide special attention to gifted students;

(5) Other (40.4%). The highest percentage of teachers list a number of various activities, that is, ways of encouraging giftedness besides extra classes, including a combination of the aforementioned types of motivation, or their combination with activities such as trips, field trips, visits to universities and institutes, visits to conferences and scientific summits, lectures and presentations, students exchanges, e-learning, seminars, school promotion, development of a special individual plan and curriculum (IOP3), recommended learning material, etc.

Table 3 Types of support gifted students receive in addition to extra classes from the perspective of teachers **(**depending on "the type of school" variablee)

			Elementary School	High School	χ^2	df	p
Types of support gifted students receive in addition to extra classes	Competitions and contests	N	8	7	10.743	4	0.030
		%	17.4	12.1			
	Project groups	N	7	24			
		%	15.2	41.4			
	Cultural and social activities and events	N	3	5			
		%	6.5	8.6			
	Prizes and rewards	N	6	2			
		%	13	3.4			
	Other	N	22	20			
		%	47.8	34.5			

Based on the data obtained using the χ^2 test ($\chi^2 = 10.743$, $p = 0.030$; $p < 0.05$) we conclude that there is a statistically significant difference in teachers' responses regarding the forms of motivation in school, depending on the type of school which they work at. We see that there is a big difference in attitudes for the category *project groups (sections/clubs)*, since this form of motivation is mostly seen in high schools (41.4% high school teachers singled out project groups, versus 15.2% of primary school teachers). This difference stems from the fact that projects represent a more serious way of learning, they require a higher level of knowledge, greater maturity and therefore are typical of high school students.

A statistically significant difference in teachers' responses regarding the scientific field variable has not been established.

Table 4 Types of support gifted students receive in school in addition to extra classes from the perspective of parents

			Parents' educational degree			Child's level of education	
			Elementary School Degree	High School Degree	Associate/Bachelor Degree	Elementary School	Middle School
Types of support gifted students receive in addition to extra classes	Competitions and contests	N	1	1	3	2	2
		%	3.33	3.33	10	6.66	6.66
	Project groups	N	2	2	3	2	5
		%	6.66	6.66	10	6,66	16.66
	Prizes and rewards	N	2	0	0	2	0
		%	6.66	0	0	6.66	0
	Other activities	N	0	1	4	2	3
		%	0	3.33	13.33	6.66	10
	No other types	N	0	4	7	1	11
		%	0	13.33	23.33	3.33	36.66

Parents' responses regarding ways to encourage giftedness in school besides extra classes show that parents with primary school education highlighted project groups/ sections, praises and rewards ("*Poetry club, drama club, students' parliament (organizational skills)"; Encourage extracurricular work. Reward with books…").* The opinions of parents with high school education were divided. As ways to encourage gifted students, besides extra classes, they emphasized participation in projects, school recitals, sections/clubs and competitions. On the other hand, there were parents who believed that school does not encourage giftedness in their children outside of extra classes. Similar opinions and views were found in parents with college and university education. However, many parents emphasized that school encourages giftedness in students beyond extra classes, including projects and sections/clubs, contests, competitions, projects, various events (*"We were informed about some interesting educational events, but not organized by the school itself", "Some teachers have suggested additional reading, workshops (Petnica Science Center, various science camps). Support and motivation are the most important"*).

Regarding the level of education of the child, parents of children going to primary school highlight the praises, awards, competitions, contests, sections/clubs and projects. Parents whose children attend high school have divided opinions, stating that giftedness is encouraged through sections/clubs, projects, contests and competitions. These parents did not mention praises and rewards, so this appears to be a difference compared to elementary school giftedness encouragement. On the other hand, there are parents who believe that giftedness in their children cannot be encouraged in any other way but with extra classes, stating that there are no other ways or that they have not noticed them.

The obtained data tell us that the views of parents and teachers are aligned. In addition to extra classes, gifted students in our schools are also encouraged through participation in competitions and contests, project work, sections/clubs, through cultural and social events, through praises and rewards, and other activities such as field trips,

lectures, students' exchanges, etc. This shows us that schools are really working on encouraging gifted students by providing them with opportunities to express talents, to apply their ideas, and at the same time socialize with other gifted peers which is important for their socialization, experience and exchange of ideas.

3.2. Acceleration and special programs for gifted students from parents' perspective

Table 5 Parents' views on acceleration and special programs as types of support for gifted students

			Parents' educational degree			Child's level of education	
			Elementary School Degree	High School Degree	Associate/Bachelor Degree	Elementary School	Middle School
Acceleration and special programs	Parents who support acceleration and speacial programs	N	3	4	9	5	10
		%	10	13.33	30	16.66	33.33
	Parents who emphasize the importance of childs' opinion and desires	N	1	0	6	1	6
		%	3.33	0	20	3,33	20
	Parents who show concern about separating a child from the peers	N	0	4	2	2	4
		%	0	13.33	6.66	6.66	13.33
	Parents who are against acceleration and speacial programs	N	1	0	0	1	0
		%	3.33	0	0	3.33	0

Although acceleration important for supporting gifted students, and we tried to find out what parents think about this teaching method by asking the following question: *What is your view on acceleration and special programs for gifted students?* and special programs are not present in our country that much, they are indeed very

The answers given have shown that most parents support acceleration and special programs (*"I fully support this. Talented children should not be stalled, but should develop the talent. This is important for the child's well-being, but also for the well-being of the society. Gifted children usually like challenges, want to push the boundaries, and this is difficult in an environment that does not fully allow it"; "I believe that such children should be separated from the group and given time and special conditions for further advancement"*).

Acceleration and special programs for gifted students are supported by parents with primary school education, while the views of parents with high school education are divided, since some parents show concern about separating a child from the peers (*"My view is that we should go slowly, do not skip grades, and when it comes to special programs for gifted students I also believe that children should not be separated from their peers, because I think that that makes them become emotionally unstable"; "I do not support acceleration, because I believe that being with their peers is of great importance for the psycho-physical development of children"*). Parents with college and university degrees support acceleration and special programs for gifted students; however, they emphasize that it is important to take into consideration the opinion and

desires of the child, and that these forms of giftedness support are more convenient when a child is more mature (*"Only when a child is mature enough (high school) can this be done, in order for this not to affect the emotional development. In my opinion, anything prior to this period is very risky because it could do more harm than good..."; "As far as acceleration and special programs are concerned, I believe this to be appropriate only in older grades, but only provided that the child's interest is taken into account (that is, what the child is gifted in) and how to align it with other courses. I think that the so-called American solution is really good because gifted children are allowed to take that particular course in an advanced grade, while they would attend all other courses with their own grade"*).

When parents' responses are viewed in relation to the level of education of the child, we come to the conclusion that parents support acceleration and special programs, but they still emphasize that it is important to respect the wishes and needs of the child and pay attention to whether the child is ready for such a change.

Parents of gifted students have recognized the benefits and opportunities provided by acceleration and ability grouping, and they have therefore supported such forms of teaching. However, at the same time, they show concern regarding the separation of the child from the peers, suggesting that this could cause problems in the socio-emotional development of the child, and that such forms of learning are better to be implemented with older children.

4. CONCLUSION

The most frequent form of working with gifted students in our country's school system is usually through extra classes which are intended for those students who want and can learn at a higher, more advanced level than regular classes could provide. However, schools also provide other ways of working with gifted students, including a diverse range of classroom and extracurricular activities. Beside this, collaboration with extra-curricular institutions, individuals and the community is also a very good opportunity to work with gifted children.

The focus of our research was on the abovementioned opportunities for motivating gifted students beyond extra classes, in order to find out what other forms and learning methods are being used in working with gifted students, that is, whether schools use the possibilities mentioned above.

The results obtained showed that the answer to this question is affirmative. The views of teachers and parents of gifted students indicate that gifted students are encouraged and motivated beyond extra classes as well. This is certainly encouraging, given that gifted students are often not provided with adequate treatment in schools because their talent is usually not recognized, that is, they are not identified as gifted.

Teachers' and parents' views are aligned, that is, they tell us that in addition to extra classes, students are also motivated through competitions, contests, sections/clubs, projects, events, praises, awards, etc.

Despite the fact that neither the parents of gifted students, nor their teachers have mentioned that acceleration and ability grouping are used, parents' views on these are positive. At the same time, parents were concerned about the separation of gifted students from their peers.

To conclude, it is important to emphasize that there has to be collaboration between parents, who are the first educators of a gifted child who notice the first signs of giftedness and who monitor its entire development, and teachers whose task is to recognize the gift or talent a child has when he or she enters school (if it has not been recognized before) and take the necessary steps to encourage this giftedness to develop further. Since neither teachers nor parents have emphasized mutual collaboration, and since it is truly of great importance for the comprehensive understanding and for the proper treatment of gifted students, it is important to raise the awareness of both teachers and parents and to work on fostering collaborative relations.

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OBLICI PODRŠKE DAROVITIM UČENICIMA U ŠKOLI

Rad je usmeren na ispitivanje stavova nastavnika i roditelja darovitih učenika o oblicima podsticanja darovitosti u školi izvan dodatne nastave i akcelearciji i specijalnim odeljenjima za darovite učenike. Shodno tome cilj rada je da utvrditi: (1) stavove nastavnika darovitih učenika o oblicima podsticanja darovitosti učenika u školi izvan dodatne nastave; (2) stavove roditelja darovitih učenika o oblicima podsticanja darovitosti učenika u školi izvan dodatne nastave; (3) mišljenje roditelja darovitih učenika o akcelariciji i specijalnim odeljenjima za darovite učenike. Uzorak istraživanja čine 104 nastavnika i 30 roditelja učenika osnovnih i srenjih škola iz Niša i Knjaževca. Stavovi nastavnika prikupljeni su anketnim upitnikom mešovitog tipa dok je u prikupljanju stavova i mišljenja roditelja darovitih učenika korišćen vođeni strukturiranii intervju. Shodno tome, kvanitativni deo obrade podataka zasniva se na deskriptivnoj statistici, dok je prilikom obrade kvalitativnih podataka, koji su dati u formi narativa, korišćena tematska analiza sadržaja putem kodiranja ključnih ideja u grupe (celine) sa zajedničkim značenjem. Rezultati sprovedenog istraživanja su pokazali da osim dodatne nastave, škola realizuje i druge aktivnosti u cilju podsticanja darovitosti učenika, a kao najčešći oblici podrške darovitima su se izdvojili: učešće na takmičenjima i konkursima, rad u sekcijama i na projektima, učešće na kulturnim i društvenim manifestacijama i nagrađivanje. Istraživanjem je utvrđeno i da roditelji podržavaju akceleraciju i specijalna odeljenja za darovite, uz dozu zabrinutosti zbog odvajanja deteta od vršnjaka.

Ključne reči: *darovitost, oblici podrške, akceleracija, grupisanje učenika, škola*