



Parental Perceptions of Who is The “Good” Teacher for Their Gifted Child

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to define what parents of gifted students consider “good” teachers, and what qualifications they believe such teachers must have in order to teach their Children in the classroom. Studies in this field have clearly shown that the “gifted” student population has special needs, requiring special teaching methods and a tailored, mentally challenging learning environment. Some of the personal, didactic and intellectual qualities that teachers of gifted students must have are required of good teachers in general. However, it has been noted that teachers sometimes show unconscious negative attitudes towards gifted students, and therefore it is most important that teachers be aware of the complexity of the issue revolving around the gifted student. In this qualitative, data and responses were collected using interviews with 20 parents of gifted students in a high school in an Arab village in northern Israel. The findings could be divided into three major categories: (1) qualities considered important in teachers; (2) the parents’ definition of what excellent teaching is; and (3) the unique qualities of the student-teacher-parents relationship that cater to the social, emotional, and intellectual welfare of the student. The findings revealed that parents of gifted students define a good teacher through a variety of features on both the professional and individual levels, and emphasize expertise in a variety of teaching methods, and character traits such as compassion, attentiveness, patience, and directness. However, parents placed more importance on the inherent personality of the teacher than on acquired teaching skills. The findings raise issues regarding the assessment of teachers before they are assigned to the gifted classroom for both personality and professional qualifications.

KEYWORDS

Gifted, gifted student, a good teacher, good teacher characteristics, parental perception of the good teacher.

what is a gifted student?

There are many various definitions for “gifted” students. Two accepted approaches are generally used: quantitative and qualitative. The former defines a gifted student as one in the top 1.5 percentile (for his age) of the population, based on the scoring of abilities in specific, measurable areas. The latter approach emphasizes the relationship between cognitive and emotional skills in a social situation, and students who show that they have a unique, higher-quality perspective or point of view of events are considered gifted (Nevo, 1997).

Today, it is recognized that alongside the cognitive aspect of giftedness in children, the relationship between intelligence and social behavior is also worthy of study, and it is vital to understand the emotional-social world of the gifted child (Han, Shi, Yong & Wang, 2012). Nevo and Rachmel (2009) also defined gifted individuals as those who have achieved a high level of excellence and/or an exceptional level of achievement. They note that giftedness is usually associated with extraordinary academic achievement or high scores in intelligence tests.

Emotional and social aspects of gifted students

The prevailing opinions in the field claim that all the experiences in a gifted child’s life, not just the intellectual ones, are affected by the fact of his giftedness (Rotigel, 2003). Nevertheless, there is still a tendency to create special programs to nurture the intellectual aspects of the gifted child while ignoring the social and emotional ones. Such a discrepancy between the broader theoretical concept and the more limited development programs may lead to difficulties for the child in adjusting himself to the program, coping with and socially bonding with his peers, or being able to properly regulate his behavior, which is often expressed through shouting or violent physical behavior towards everyone around them, both children and adults (Vidergor & Reiter, 2008).

Rotigel (2003) points out that “gifted development” is asynchronous development: a child may have extraordinary intellectual abilities for his age, while his abilities in other areas

meet the norms of his age. This gives rise to concern regarding the lack of compatibility in the social context, as gifted children often enter the educational framework earlier than others. The physical differences in development are usually less cause for concern. The tendency of parents and teachers to accelerate the gifted child’s progress through the educational system often increases this gap, requiring complex solutions on the part of child in order to adapt himself into a group of children who are more physically and emotionally mature.

A sense of personal well-being has a great impact on the functioning of gifted students. The social environment plays a significant role in the learning process, and there is a greater chance that gifted students will, as would all children, have more significant opportunities to learn if they share their learning environment with others of similar or higher abilities. A positive atmosphere increases enjoyment, provides support and acceptance, and gives students opportunities for peer learning and higher achievement. Where such a social environment does not exist, the isolation that gifted children feel may overcome any benefit they may have from their advanced abilities. They may feel odd, unaccepted by his peers, and arrogant. This feeling of not fitting in may prevent them from achieving their potential (Burney, 2008). Gifted children may also try to cope with their emotional problems by concealing their skills and abilities from those around them (parents, teachers, and peers), through the childish, yet natural, desire to feel equal to their peers and to receive the same amount of attention. On the whole, research in this field indicates that gifted children have high emotional-social abilities. However, some findings emphasize that feeling of “not fitting in” that probably stem from the cognitive gap, which influences their interests and may often lead to difficulties in relationships with their peers (Neihart, 1999).

What makes a “good” teacher for gifted students?

The ideal teachers for gifted students are those who can adapt themselves and their talents to meet the unique needs of the students, and who have also acquired appropriate skills

and tools to deal with the cognitive, social, and emotional aspects of their students (Davis & Rimm, 2004; Leikin, 2011; Milgram & Hong, 2009; Vialle & Quigley, 2010). The steering committee of the Department of Gifted and Excellent Students in the Ministry of Education supports this approach and has determined that the instruction of gifted students is a unique pedagogical field (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2004), and that teachers of such students must have special behavioral, didactic and intellectual skills (Vialle & Quigley, 2010).

The teacher is the main factor in the quality of education, and therefore the question of what makes a teacher "good" is crucial (Tamir, 1995). The entire education system, but especially the teachers themselves, is the socialization agent that prepares the next generation. For decades, sociologists have argued that the classroom is a social microcosm wherein students practice social relationship and acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to function as adults in society (Talcott, 1959/1989). A review of the literature on the subject suggests that the qualities of good teachers are affected by the individual's personal experiences, professional experience gained over the years, and from the cultural identity gained in his childhood (Harpaz, 2000).

First and foremost, good teachers are those who teach effectively. Good teaching promotes good learning, and this leads to the development of a "good" graduate ("the preferred graduate" or the "educated person"). The issue of what is a "preferred graduate" depends on the pedagogical ideology. The definition of a good teacher is therefore dependent on the definition of "good teaching," which depends on the definition of "good learning," which depends on the definition of a "preferred graduate," which depends on the pedagogical ideology (Kfir, 2009). "Effective teachers" will provide their students with the core curriculum content as formulated by the authoritative source, incorporating what is considered worthy and important in society. Teachers, thus, must be fully familiar with the content of the core curriculum. Teachers must also be skilled in general pedagogy, which will allow maximum efficacy in teaching and learning (Milgram, 1979).

Another approach defining good teachers is based on the extent to which they bring their students toward the desired goals, whether those goals are defined as exemplary achievement, a well-developed rhetorical ability, spiritual growth, or some other objective. Thus, good teachers may be defined as those who teach with the cultural goals in mind. They are agents of social change who develop the individual's personality and provide disciplinary information (Admanit, 2003). In addition, good teachers prepare their students for life, and students will remember the good qualities endowed to them by a good teacher throughout their life.

A review of the literature describing the qualities and skills of a good teacher reveals that they can be divided into two distinct categories: professional-pedagogical and personal-emotional. Professionally, good teachers are capable of stimulating their students and developing their intellectual abilities, always anticipating any difficulties that may arise in the subject under study (Ben-Horin, 2004). They will be authorities in their field, acquainted with the many learning and teaching styles, demonstrate originality and creativity, be fluent and skilled in rhetoric, and be able to manage "learning situations." Pedagogically, they furnish a personal example to their students, and guide, advise, and encourage the development of intellectual curiosity and learning motivation among their students. They are able to express their ideas simply and understandably (Avinon, 2005).

On the personal-emotional side, it appears that the requirements for a good teacher are diverse, and Ben-Horin (2004) has even stated that good teachers have the attributes of good parents: they are sensitive, concerned, attentive, understanding, encouraging, and supportive. Such factors boost their students' confidence, reinforce their strengths, and sup-

port their weak points. According to Avinon (2005) a good teacher is brave, honest, and affectionate, and demonstrates self-respect, self-awareness, individual responsibility, imagination, improvisation skills, and a sense of humor.

We thus see that teachers who devote themselves to their students' development transform into mentors – educators who strive to stabilize the identity, worldview, and life values of their student, and provide valuable learning with meaning (Tadmor, 2010). In order to achieve these objectives, a personal relationship between parents, students and teachers is demanded, one that depends, among other things, on the personality traits of the teacher (Awad, Zoabi & Khalil, 2010). Hence, good teachers require a wide range of abilities and traits that not only relate to their professionalism and knowledge, but also to their personality, views and behavior.

In addition to the pedagogical perspective that a good teacher is one with effective techniques and predefined skills to transmit information effectively, focus has recently been placed on the teacher's concept of his work and his job. Hativa (2003a) points out that there is no formula for good teaching; every good teacher has a unique personality and different methods, meaning that good teaching cannot be defined by specific factors. Today, the definition of a good teacher seeks to embrace the phenomenon holistically by trying to understand the teachers' views on such concepts as knowledge, teaching, learning, and curriculum (Levine & Nevo, 2000).

Awad, Zoabi & Khalil (2010) claim that the personal traits of individuals influence their attitudes, such that conservative teachers will prefer a teaching style in which the academic content and accumulated information are the goals themselves, while more progressive, flexible and tolerant teachers will prefer a teaching style that allows the maximum development possible for their students.

What do gifted students look for in a "good" teacher?

Studies also have investigated what specific qualities *gifted* students expect in their teachers. All parties involved – students, parents, academic personnel, Ministry of Education officials, administrative and therapeutic staff – believe that in the case of gifted students, teachers play a very significant role. Landvogt (2001) and Delisle (2006) found that gifted students believe that the ideal teacher will possess broad knowledge in their area of expertise, a love for their chosen field, and a great enjoyment of teaching. They will be able to adjust the curriculum and instructional methods to meet the unique needs of their students' diverse learning and thinking styles as a result of having a deep understanding of the cognitive, social, and emotional psychology and development of their students. A "good" teacher, according to the literature, will be familiar with the various approaches that define what gifted is, understand the effect that the environment may have on the cultivation of the student's giftedness, and be able to understand and develop a connection between the special framework for gifted students and the regular framework in the school and community. In addition, "good" teachers are willing to take risks and experiment with ways of sharing the learning process with students.

Mevarech and Blass (1999) pointed out that teachers of gifted students must view teaching as a science, art, and moral calling. They also listed the abilities that teachers of gifted students need, and divided them into four components: (a) to properly identify what the child knows or does not know at this point; (b) to explain concepts in a way that interests, challenges and fascinates the student; (c) to be able to give constructive feedback, meaning not only to give feedback, but to give the student the opportunity to adjust his learning methods to allow full control of the material; and (d) to cultivate motivation and self-esteem in the student.

On the other hand, Ziv and Sorongon (2011) defines a good teacher for gifted students as one who is gifted himself, and states that gifted students believe that good teachers must

be "teachers of tomorrow" who use multimedia much more than teachers do today. They will also have skills that surpass those of today's teacher: they must have a positive attitude toward excellence, productivity and leadership; enjoy working with students who require constant challenge and innovation; be willing to adapt themselves to the social and emotional needs, and accomplishments of their students; and be able to use control and skill in using sound teaching methods that combine ideology with pedagogical philosophy, while adjusting that pedagogical logic to the teaching design.

The Ministry of Education (2004) also addressed the subject of what knowledge and abilities are required by teachers of gifted students and stress the importance of the teacher's ability to identify the outstanding capabilities of gifted students and to direct the gifted child for evaluation so that his talents may be developed. Teachers must be able to recognize different ability levels, learning styles, and areas of interest and plan their lessons accordingly. In addition, they must be able to advise students, parents, and other teachers regarding cases of under-achievement, options for higher education and professions. They must be aware of the special problems related to gifted students. In other words, the Ministry of Education recognizes that teachers of gifted students must have special abilities alongside a variety of administrative skills that enable them to adapt normal classroom activities for their students so that bright students can work at a pace and level suitable to their abilities, but still not deviate from the timetable, content, and other requirements in the educational system. The teacher must also be able to collect and disseminate information on innovative teaching methods, samples of learning materials, human resources that can be used, and any special options for gifted children and teenagers.

Method Participants

Participating in the study were 20 parents of gifted students in a high school located in the north of the Israel. The parents selected at random.

These parents of gifted students belonged to a medium-high socio-economic stratum (compared to most other parents in the school, who belonged to a low-to-medium one), and most of them had an academic education.

Research tools

One tool was used for data collection – interviews. The interview was conducted face-to-face on a one-to-one basis and recorded for later transcription. It was based on one open question: "What do you think a 'good' teacher for gifted students is?" Follow-up questions were then derived based on the parents answer to that question. For example, "What qualities do you think a good teacher should have?"

The research process

Interviews were scheduled with the parents. Each interview lasted approximately an hour and a half, and took place in the guidance counselor's office, during the school day. During this meeting, the parents were asked to document in it any observations regarding a teacher perceived by them as a good teacher, including descriptions of specific occurrences and concrete examples, and also thoughts and personal opinions. During the meeting, the parents were also asked to tell the researcher which would include reasons why they believe that individual to be a good choice to teach gifted students, specifying what attributes, qualities, and skills that they liked in the teacher.

Results

All statements related to qualities of a "good" teacher that were noted during the interview were gathered and examined. There were many features that covered a range of fields: educational-pedagogical, administrative, social, personal and more.

For the purpose of analysis, statements and descriptions were given an initial coding and then gathered into nine common categories (see below). The next stage consisted of collecting categories into themes. Three major themes were identified: (a) qualities that make a good teacher, (b) qualities of good teaching, and (c) qualities of a good parents- student-teacher relationship.

Qualities of a "good" teacher

The first theme consisted of individual traits that gave a teacher the skill and aptitude necessary to teach gifted students, and included educational-pedagogic and social-personal skills, leadership and administrative skills, professionalism and personal charisma, and an emphasis on interpersonal communication abilities.

Overall, participants stressed various intrinsic qualities, and expected teachers to be kind, pleasant, sensitive, attentive, interested, supportive and understanding, qualities that cannot usually be taught.

Leadership and administration skills

Parents' placed a great deal of importance on the teachers' ability to effectively lead, organize and manage their class. Particular features mentioned included leadership, the ability to persuade, decision-making under pressure, and charisma. Parents pointed out that such features help teachers create an optimal learning environment not only in the classroom, but in the teachers' room and elsewhere by managing effective relationships between and with the students, the parents, and other academic staff.

The concept of initiative was mentioned a number of times as an important feature for both teaching in front of the class and regarding other elements and personnel in the school. It appears that, according to the parents, teachers who can take initiative will constantly be introducing innovations for the benefit of their students, leading to gradual changes in the school. Showing initiative through creative thinking encourages students to think similarly and to take a more active part in learning.

Interpersonal communication and concern

Another category that appeared in the responses of the parents related to effective inter-personal communication skills. A good teacher must have the ability to communicate effectively not only with his students, but with the educational staff and the parents. Parents felt that effective communication skills indicate a teacher who has a sense belonging to his class and cares. It allows him to be involved in class activity and advance his goals. Demonstrating good interpersonal communication with administrators and educational staff also influences the students' attitudes, and encourages them to love the school and their teachers.

Besides being able to communicate effectively, a good teacher, according to the parents, must, first and foremost, show that he cares deeply about his students and is aware of their individual needs. He will devote time and energy to them, take time to listen to any problems that may be upsetting or distracting them, and show that he is sensitive to their emotional, academic and social needs. His availability to listen to his students' problems encourages the students to be near, increasing their availability for learning, motivation and academic achievement.

Professionalism

The third major category that defined a good teacher related to the role of teacher and the extent of the teacher's professionalism. Parents felt that a good teacher should have achieved a certain level of knowledge before beginning his teaching role, and be constantly developing and updating that knowledge to increase his professionalism and expertise in the subject or in any other role that he fills in the school. This includes being professionally critical of himself and his work so that he can constantly be improving. This must also be com-

bined with outstanding pedagogical skills so that he can effectively transfer this knowledge to his students. A teacher who demonstrates professionalism serves as a model for others, motivating other teachers and students in the school to follow his example.

Qualities of good teaching

The second theme could be defined as statements that defined the parent's concept of good teaching, which in general means being able to customize the syllabus by providing interesting, challenging activities tailored to their intellectual level so as to provide novel and varied materials and methods. A "good" teacher, who is sophisticated and knowledgeable, will be able to provide "good" teaching.

Customized/adapted/modified teaching

The foremost characteristic of good teaching, according to the parents, is teaching that appeals to their curiosity and intelligence level by introducing material that may be beyond what is required for matriculation, but being careful not to lose sight of curriculum requirements set by the of the Ministry of Education for matriculation. The teacher will use a variety of activities appropriate to the homogeneous level of his students.

In addition, parents showed that they believe that properly adapted lessons encouraged their students to study independently, explore, experiment, and even to take personal responsibility for the learning process, thus directing the students to meet the demands of the school and the curriculum. This way, the teacher contributes to their educational success and achievements.

Challenging and interesting lessons

Besides the importance given to the teacher's professional knowledge, parents also expected the teachers to have extensive pedagogical knowledge, and be familiar with many different, creative teaching methods, to be able to design interesting lessons that will challenge the students, and encourage curiosity and competitiveness. Many of responses referred to the idea of challenging learning using interesting and even competitive methods. They pointed out that intriguing lessons will encourage the students to learn and allow them to absorb more information as a result of their readiness and willingness to learn.

The parents claimed that innovative and diverse instruction methods encourages creativity, challenge and competitiveness, increases their motivation to learn and ultimately leads to the students' achieving success. They compared this to other methods that they perceived as less effective and more frustrating, destroying their motivation to learn and even making them dislike their studies, the subject matter, and the teacher.

Novel and varied methods and materials

Parents further pointed out that in order to be able to customize lessons and make them challenging, the teacher needs to be knowledgeable of the mores recent developments in teaching methods and styles, and be able to teach the material in non-conventional, original ways. Using numerous, wide-ranging supplementary materials, ranging from games and flashcards to technological means (video clips, Power Point presentations, and the like) help students focus better on the instruction; content that is delivered -conventionally (i.e., not frontally) provides tangible, psychological encouragement and increases the students' love for the material and learning.

Parents- teacher-student relationship

One significant issue that the parents emphasized was the importance of a close parents-teacher-student relationship. Good teachers have the skill and patience to pay attention to their students and their parents and form a relationship based on mutual respect. Teachers who are attentive counsel their students and their parents and believe in their abilities, and thus demonstrate faith in their students and causing parents to be

more involved. Good teachers should be able to identify the talents that make each of their students unique, and bestow attention on each student, both in the personally and academically.

The teacher will also be able to recognize weaknesses that must be addressed and help their students with their social problems and causing parents to be more involved.

Mutual respect

The data indicates that parents place great importance on the development of a relationship with their sons and their teachers that is based on mutual respect and equality. When teachers show respect to the students, it leads the student to treat the teacher with respect and affection. It appears that students feel that such a relationship helps them advance socially and academically because students who like and respect their teachers are more eager to come to class and are more apt to successfully apply themselves to their studies. Such a mutual relationship develops with time and requires the teacher to pay individual attention to each student, encouraging their involvement in class.

An important aspect of the parents-teacher-student relationship the willingness and ability of the teacher to communicate with the students, staff, and parents on a one-to-one basis, with patience, attentiveness, and the ability to listen to suggestions. All the participants, in all three grade levels, placed high importance on teachers' efforts to initiate personal conversations with the students so as to listen to their individual needs, help solve personal problems, or guide them academically or socially. Parents felt that a teacher who affords his students the attention they need and gives them the opportunity to express themselves, allows them to have the time they need to devote to their studies and to succeed on social, spiritual, and academic levels. Such a relationship gives them self-confidence, feelings of self-worth, and helps them develop life skills.

Faith in the student and his abilities

Parents responded that a good teacher is one who believes in his students' capabilities, leading the student to believe in himself and to be proud of his abilities and his individuality. A teacher who is convinced that his students can succeed will adapt his teaching methods to his students to attain that goal. When this feeling of belief is transmitted to the students and their parents, it gives them a sense of confidence in themselves, the teacher, and the school. This belief supports the students, giving them the resilience required to cope with any setbacks. A teacher who believes in his students will initiate conversations to encourage them, and be eager to help with any problem. In fact, a number of students stated that, in their opinion, this issue is even more important to their progress than academic aspects.

Discovering and identifying the uniqueness of each student

Parents stated that another important aspect of the teacher-student relationship is the teacher's ability to understand and be sensitive to his students' individuality and uniqueness, and to appreciate the differences between them. This allows the teacher to adapt his style of teaching to their needs so as to highlight each student's individual strengths, develop any weak points, and encourage each student to improve on an individual level. The teacher will make the effort to make the student, other teachers or the parents aware of any problems, thus leading to success in studies and high grades.

Discussion

The purpose of the study is to define what parents of gifted students consider "good" teachers, and what qualifications they believe such teachers must have in order to teach their Childs in the classroom. Their responses showed that they valued various features regarding both the personality and the professionalism of the teacher.-

The qualities of a "good" teacher

This study suggests that gifted students place great importance on the teacher's personal qualities and his ability to meet their personal, emotional, and social needs. These qualities are ones that every teacher should acquire even before teaching, but some of them are character traits that cannot necessarily be attained through training, particularly individual qualities that have to do with interpersonal communication, a feeling of belonging, responsibility toward the school, compassion and creativity.

The findings show that the criteria given by the parents fall along two main axes: personal-behavioral, and professional. This agrees to a large extent with available literature regarding the qualities of a good teacher, and the axes defined by Ziv and Sorongon (2011): personality and knowledge. Professionally, it seems that it is important that teachers of gifted students show professionalism and expertise not only in their subject area, but also regarding the requirements for being an effective teacher. Cochran-Smith (2005), who compared novice teachers with experienced ones, pointed out the importance of professionalism both regarding the teacher's skill in teaching the curriculum and regarding their knowledge of the subject itself. He concluded that professional teachers acquired their abilities for reflective expression and creating new knowledge, along with their professional and autonomous maturity, as a result of work experience. It appears that extensive knowledge both in their specific teaching area and in teaching methods – allowing them to be more connected to their students, extend their teaching beyond bare facts, and present information in varied, challenging ways – make them better teachers in general and better teachers for gifted students in particular.

This study shows that the participants placed great emphasis on the teacher's personal qualities, with emphasis on attentiveness, compassion, and consideration, and being willing to invest time and effort in his students. These findings support previous studies (Leikin, 2011; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Hativa, 2003a) that pointed to the importance of the teacher's personality and the correlation between the ability to form relationships with students and the quality of teaching. Pintrich & Schunk (2002), who studied discipline and behavior problems in the school, showed that a listening, loving, and caring teacher who is attentive and aware of their students' personal problems can get closer to the students and prevent negative behavior. In the current study, all the students mentioned, and even emphasized, the importance of these attributes and how important it was to them that their teacher be cognizant of their personal needs, trust in their abilities, and be considerate, understanding, and supporting.

An interesting finding was that students stressed the importance of qualities that are not necessarily connected to teaching skills per se such as leadership, the ability to persuade, administration capabilities, and charisma, as necessary for classroom management. These characteristics are usually associated with skilled administrators or administrative-level teachers, but according to the data gathered, the gifted students who participated in this study consider such qualities necessary for a good teacher. This finding supports a study by Loughran & Berry (2005) that describes a good teacher as a leader, and that elements of leadership form a foundation for his role that seeks to present challenges and inspire the curiosity of his students and to allow him the ability to organize and manage the students, the class, and the material taught. An explanation may be that those qualities mentioned above that are perceived as leadership qualities (charisma, confidence, persuasive abilities) combined with effective rhetoric make the teacher a good speaker who can speak to a class in a fluent, engaging manner, thus making it easier to keep his students' attention for long periods, increasing their trust in the information and improving their learning experience. This explanation is also supported by the findings of Avinon (2005), who pointed out that a good teacher needs to be a skilled and fluent orator who can express ideas in a simple,

understandable way. In addition, it is possible that good administrative capabilities assist the teacher in the routine tasks of organizing and preparing lessons, presenting information in an organized, coherent manner, managing time, and planning the curriculum to meet syllabus requirements and student needs. This contributes to a more positive learning experience for the gifted students, and to a feeling of trust in the teacher who stands before them.

Good teaching

Rotem and Peled (2008) define meaningful learning as that which is active and cooperative, and where interaction between learners is part of the learning process. Peer learning is vital for 21st-century skills, and interactive learning in cooperation with all the students allows them to learn according to their individual capabilities and limitations so that learning is appropriate and significant. Meaningful learning means learning that is relevant to the world of the learners, and promotes action and creativity, increases cooperation and dialog between peers, encourages learning outside the classroom, considers the diversity among learners, and invites inquisitiveness. Alongside this, the use of innovative teaching methods and tools requires technological knowledge on the part of the teacher, meaning that he also has the ability to himself be a learner and invest the time and energy required to remain abreast of his field.

According to the participants in this study, good teaching is, first and foremost, that which meets the demands of the curriculum set forth by the Ministry of Education and the pedagogical advisors for each subject, and upon which the various national examinations (such as matriculation examinations) are based. In addition, the material should be adapted to the unique intellectual needs of gifted students, and must be challenging and diverse, encourage competitiveness in the classroom, and make use of supplementary material and creative and innovative technology. Good teaching leads to improved academic achievement and higher motivation, encourages the acquisition of learning skills, fosters curiosity, inquisitiveness, and the ability to learn independently, and leads to positive feelings toward the teacher and the school in general.

These findings are supported by those of previous studies (Along, 2004; Harpaz, 2000; Hativa, 2003b) that investigated teaching methods that increase student motivation, and found that students find lessons more interesting when it includes various activities, supplementary materials, and technological visualization (Power Point presentations, movies, etc.). Hativa (2003a), studied teaching in the technological era, pointed out the importance of preparing students for academic success by using experiential learning, group peer learning, and the latest teaching and instructive technological applications. It was shown that using a variety of teaching methods and activities – games, demonstrations, activities, multimedia, presentations and more — raises students' level of interest and motivation. Thus, there seems to be a direct correlation between the teacher's motivation (as expressed by his investment in his students, his willingness to learn about and experiment with a variety of new, advanced teaching methods) and the students' motivation. In this context, the findings of Harpaz (2000), which indicated a positive correlation between student and teacher' motivation, should be noted. The findings of the current study suggest that this may be a two-way, mutual, positive relationship, which encompasses the teaching methods used by the teacher.

As discussed above, although good teaching means that teachers are aware of the many tools and methods that make learning meaningful to their students, studies have indicated that teachers who are interested in using advanced, technological teaching methods must face many obstacles. Among other obstacles are the lack of appropriate training, a lack of appropriate support and guidance for teachers, an inadequate number of computers in classrooms in relation to the number of student, and an insufficient quantity of computers in the teachers' room for lesson planning, and the ones that are

present are of poor quality and with slow internet connections (Mioduser, Nachmias, Tubin & Forkosh, 2006).

Parents-student-teacher relationship

The results of this study emphasize the effect that the relationship with a good teacher has on student learning. This relationship depends on the personality traits of the teacher, most of which are inborn qualities suitable for the role of teacher and not necessarily qualities that can be acquired through training. The data also revealed the importance the participants gave to the relationships between the teachers and the parents and other school personnel. The students specified that the teacher must exhibit mutual respect, genuine affection, and patience, and these should be based on a firm belief in his students' capabilities. The teacher should initiate one-on-one conversations and consultations and be willing to respond to the various needs of the student, not just on an academic-intellectual level. Leikin (2011) similarly described a good teacher for gifted students: someone who plays the psychologist with a differential approach to teaching, loves his students, transmits to them his belief in their powers, and is sure of himself and his students.

Other studies, too, support these findings and highlight the importance of a personal relationship between teachers and students and the part it plays in the students' self-esteem and learning motivation (Harvey, 2001), for their social and academic success (Almog, 2004), and on the amount of love and respect they have for the teachers, the school and the education system in general (Kfir, 2009). One possible explanation for this phenomenon may lie in the "Pygmalion effect" described in the research of Davis & Rimm (2004), which suggests that the teacher's belief in his students and his high expectations of their abilities causes the students to believe in themselves, leading to an increase in motivation and a parallel increase in performance. Another reason may be that when teachers invest time and effort in their students and express their belief in them, students strive harder to please the teacher rather than allow their beloved teacher to be disappointed (Loughran & Berry, 2005).

Rotigel (2003) also investigated the self-image and emotional and social aspects of gifted students and found that the student's academic self-image is linked to the way that he perceives his level of academic functioning and the way in which he imagines others in his learning environment regard his academic ability. Hence, a teacher who believes in his students' abilities, understands their unique talents, and makes a dedicated effort to adapt his teaching to their level, leads his students to have a healthy self-image thereby improving their academic performance.

Conclusions

The literature and education system recognize that teachers of gifted students need to have unique professional qualities and behaviors. Nevertheless, teachers of gifted students do not receive any training that is special or different from the norm, nor do they undergo a special course of study that differs from the training provided to all other teachers in the educational system.

The findings of this study show that parents of gifted students are well aware of the qualities that "good" teachers should have, both regarding character and personality traits, and teaching skills, and that this suggests that it is imperative for teaching institutions and after-school centers to make careful and informed choices when hiring the most suitable teachers who meet these qualifications. This is especially important regarding the personality of the teacher, since it seems that the personal qualities demanded by the parents of gifted students of a good teacher are for the most part character traits that are not acquired through training and/or education. It further attests to the importance that the educational system must give to developing and reinforcing such qualities in teachers destined to face the unique challenges involved, something that should ideally be addressed during the training stages.

The study also suggests that an assessment of the teacher's personality should be done during the placement process. Successfully matching the teacher to this unique student population will ultimately improve the learning processes in the classes.

The findings of this study can also serve as practical procedural recommendations for the teachers of gifted students and for the administrators in those schools where such classes exist. However, it goes without saying that these recommendations should have the backup of the educational system, and that it will supply appropriate in the form of training, continuing education programs, and time allotted for planning lessons and for conducting individual dialogs with students and parents.

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