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From a Primary Source: Interview with Dr. Joseph Renzulli

De una fuente primaria: entrevista con el Dr. Joseph Renzulli

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Abstract

This paper is based on a few questions Dr. Renzulli kindly answered in our journal in a video interview on November 30, 2022. Although the intention was to publish a traditional interview, neither Joe nor I could do it. There are many important ideas, theoretical issues, practical suggestions, and real-world experiences implemented or inspired by this extraordinary scholar, researcher, and human being that an ordinary model just does not fit here. This paper briefly introduces Dr. Joseph S. Renzulli for those who still do not know him, without mentioning all his awards and recognitions, because the space herein would not be enough. Considering the importance of this subject, high abilities/giftedness and intelligence were differentiated in his own words, some of his and other authors' citations, and his Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness are presented. Identification and gifted education topics translate a clear message to Latin-American educators and governments preceding the final reflections of Dr. Renzulli's enthusiastic reader and follower.

Keywords: Dr. Renzulli, gifted education, identification, giftedness

Resumen

Este artículo está basado en algunas preguntas que el Dr. Renzulli gentilmente respondió para nuestra revista en una entrevista por video el 30 de noviembre de 2022. Aunque la intención era publicar una entrevista tradicional, ni Joe ni yo pudimos hacerlo. Hay tantas importantes ideas, aspectos teóricos, sugerencias prácticas y experiencias en el mundo real implementadas o inspiradas por este extraordinario académico, investigador y ser humano que un modelo común sencillamente no se encajaría aquí. Entonces, este artículo presenta resumidamente al Dr. Joseph S. Renzulli para aquellos y aquellas que todavía no lo conocen, sin mencionar todos sus

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premios y reconocimientos, porque este espacio no sería suficiente. Considerando la importancia de este tema, las altas habilidades/superdotación y la inteligencia fueron diferenciadas en sus propias palabras y en algunas citaciones suyas y de otros autores y se presenta su Concepción de la Superdotación de los Tres Anillos. Los temas de la identificación y la educación para superdotados traducen un claro mensaje a los educadores y gobiernos latinoamericanos, precediendo las reflexiones finales de esta lectora y seguidora fervorosa del Dr. Renzulli.

Palabras clave: Dr. Renzulli, educación para altas habilidades/Superdotación, identificación, altas habilidades/superdotación.

Just to introduce him

Every researcher, student, or teacher involved in gifted education knows Dr. Joseph Renzulli, as one of the most important leaders in giftedness in the world.

Hébert (2016) told us part of Joseph's life story, which begins in New Jersey, where he and his two brothers were raised by their mother who "cleaned houses for wealthy families in the community in order to provide for her children" (p. 460) which avoided Joe and his brothers to be taken for adoption after their father passed away when Joe was just 8 years old.

After the regular experiences gifted students used to have – from being challenged and encouraged to follow their interests by one or two teachers - to being sent to the detention bench and bullied by other teachers and colleagues, Dr. Renzulli became a teacher in 1958.

The Sputnik launched by the Russians made the Americans pay more attention to highly able science and mathematician learners, and Joe was invited to develop a science program at the school he worked, the "early field test for what would later become Renzulli's Enrichment Triad Model" (Hébert, 2016, p. 465).

Joe graduated with a master's degree in educational psychology at Rutgers school psychology program in 1962, where "one of his personality assessment teachers - Jane Beasley Rath - handed him a manuscript to review," which "was the earliest version of the Getzels and Jackson´s (1962) text on creativity and intelligence that would later become the seminal contribution entitled *Creativity and Intelligence"* (Ibidem, p. 466).

In 1966, Joe graduated with a doctoral degree in educational psychology under Dr. Virgil Ward's guidance at the University of Virginia with a dissertation entitled "Diagnostic and Evaluative Scales for Differential Education of the Gifted". That same year, he was invited to join the faculty at the University of Connecticut; while at the university, Joe "approached his dean [and asked] to teach a graduate course in gifted education" (Ibidem, p. 468) as state legislation was passed and teachers needed to be trained in this field. The NEAG School of Education at the University of Connecticut, gained one of the most creative-productive researchers in the field of gifted education.

Although he certainly does not remember, I first met Joe - as he likes to be called - in 1998, during an international conference held in Brasília, Brazil, and then in some

other opportunities; he even tried to drink a “mate” upon our insistent request a few years later.

I have become increasingly interested in his studies, which have supported all my research over many years, however, what has impressed me most was Joe’s warmness and energy. In 2019, I had the honor to win a Fulbright scholarship at the UConn Renzulli Center for Creativity, Gifted Education, and Talented Development, where I remember Joe walking around every day, holding his mug and smiling at everybody who was passing by.

I think that Joe’s hard early life and his immigrant background have carved the energetic, unselfish, and kind man who is always ready to help and share his knowledge, which are the best virtues of a scholar. Below are some of the ideas and contributions to the field of gifted education that he shared with me in this interview on November 30, 2022.

I had forwarded eight questions to Dr. Renzulli beforehand, but creative people use their own order and rhythm, so Joe answered them at his own pace.

I will let Joe speak in italics and take the liberty to make some additions here and there to enlighten those who are getting in touch with Renzulli’s giftedness conception, identification and education approach.

High Abilities/Giftedness and/or Intelligence?

Although many people wrongly believe studies on high abilities/giftedness are a “new issue” and giftedness is usually confused with intelligence, research on the topic and even educational services have been developed for over one hundred years now.

Even before Terman’s monumental study, Leta Hollingworth had already studied, wrote on giftedness, and supported gifted education since 1916, arguing that “it is the business of education to consider all forms of giftedness in pupils in regard to how unusual individuals may be trained for their own welfare and that of society at large” (Colangelo & Davis, 1991, p. 7).

The mid-seventies were a landmark in the shift in the study of giftedness. Feldman (1992) presented the characteristics of two paradigms, the old one considering giftedness as a static and invariable trait identified by IQ tests, expressed without special intervention, having an elitist, authoritarian, hierarchical, and ethnocentric character and targeting school, and the new paradigm, where giftedness is multifaceted, based on a theory oriented to processes where context is crucial, having a collaborative character and oriented to knowledge fields and emphasizing diversity (Feldman, 1992). New definitions began to consider different areas or abilities other than the traditional “linguistic and logical-mathematical,” somehow measured by IQ tests, and identification began including more qualitative indicators. Dr. Renzulli was one of the pioneers of this new paradigm.

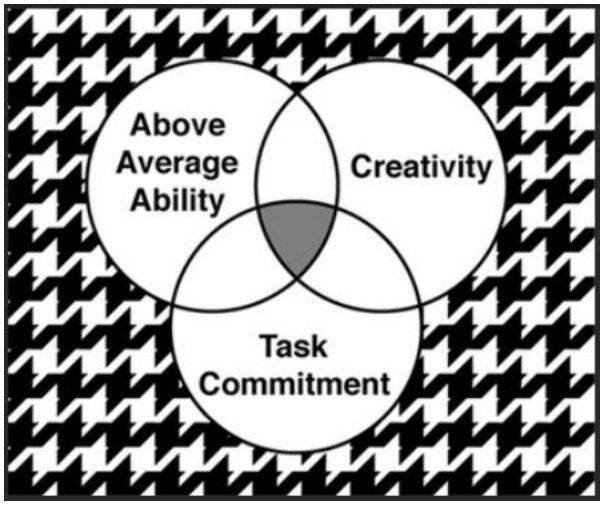
In 1978, a traditional education journal - *Phi Delta Kappan* - published Renzulli’s seminal paper, *What makes Giftedness? Reexamining a Definition* (Renzulli, 1978), which was “originally rejected by journals in gifted education” and “it has now become the most widely cited article in the field” The giftedness definition there proposed was

updated “three times to include new research and changes in identification and programming that have taken place in the field over the years” (Renzulli, 2016, p. 55). It defines gifted behaviors as those:

> that reflect an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits – these clusters being above average general and/or specific abilities, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity. Gifted and talented children are those possessing or capable of developing this composite set of traits and applying them to any potentially valuable area of human performance. Children who manifest or are capable of developing an interaction among the three clusters require a wide variety of educational opportunities and services that are not ordinarily provided through regular instructional programmes. (Renzulli, 1986, p. 11-12)

Figure 1

Graphic Representation of the Three-Ring Definition of Giftedness

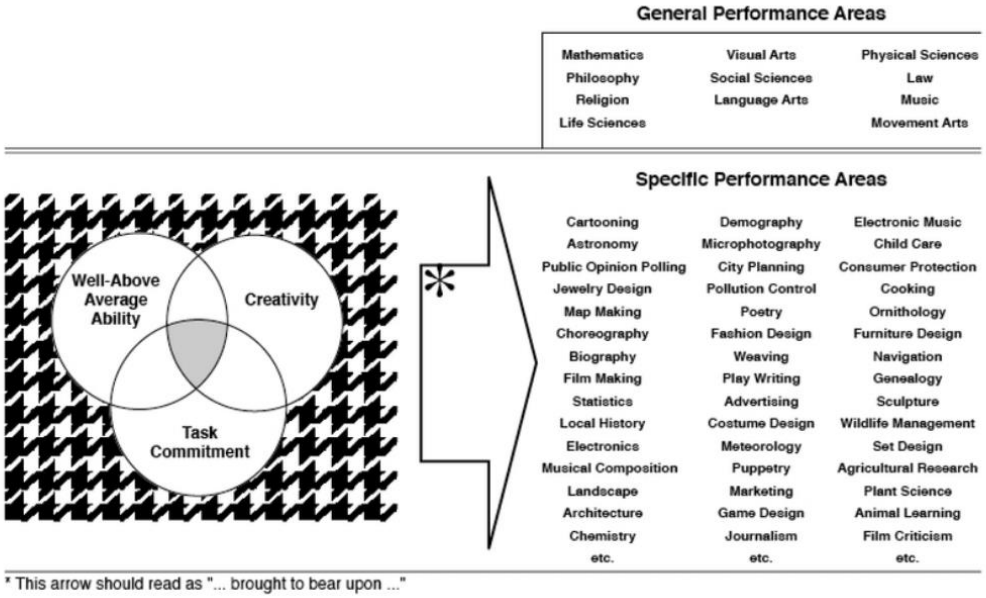


Source: Renzulli, 2016, p. 67

Although Figure 1 is the original graphic representation of giftedness, where “the three rings are embedded in a houndstooth background that represents the interaction between personality and environmental factors that give rise to the three rings” (Renzulli, 2016, p. 67), there are many other Venn diagrams presented in the web, papers and even in books that differ from this original one and are incorrectly named as this.

Figure 2 is even clearer as to the giftedness definition, because it shows what Renzulli (2016b) means when he refers to above average abilities.

Figure 2
Conception of Giftedness



Source: Renzulli, 2020, p. 3

It is important to add some particular explanation that Renzulli (2016) gave when he referred “that our present efforts to define giftedness are based on a long history of previous studies focused mainly on the concept of intelligence” (p. 60), also expressing that the above average ability can be demonstrated not only in academic achievement areas but also in one or more of the intelligences Gardner has considered in his Multiple Intelligence theory, whose different forms of expression can be appreciated on Figure 2.

> *Well, first of all, let me explain that I have argued that there are two types of giftedness, and one is what I call a schoolhouse or lesson learning giftedness, and that's the type that relates mostly to test scores. And the other is what I call creative-productive giftedness. And that is largely based on my work on the three-ring conception of giftedness, where I tried to point out that what I call gifted behaviors - I'm very fond of using the word as an adjective rather than a noun - consists of an interaction, between and among above average ability in a particular area - it doesn't have to be in everything, it could be in the arts, it could be in leadership, it could be in different kinds of scientific or literary skills - but you're above average compared to your peers, which would be, again, people of the same age, level or experience.*
>
> *The second circle is creativity and I believe that creative-productive giftedness obviously is very dependent upon persons having new original ideas and the people around the world that we know as famous people, regardless of whatever area they work in, are always people who have brought creative ideas*

to their field of study, to their art, to their business, to their science, to their literature.

And the third circle is task commitment. And think of that as the focused form of energy that you're willing to put lots of hours of hard work into developing a product in that area, whether that product is a scientific article or experiment, whether it's a poem or a book or a novel, whether it's a piece of artistic work, whether it's starting a business, whether it is forming some kind of organization that is designed to save the economy or save the ecology of the earth, but it must be those three things working together that result in what I call, again, gifted behaviors. And notice that I use the word as an adjective.

Many other experts in the giftedness field recognize the leadership of Dr. Renzulli. Sternberg, Jarvin & Grigorenko (2011, p. 24) assessed that “one of the best-known models of giftedness is the Renzulli model (Reis & Renzulli, in press; Renzulli, 1984, 2005, 2009)”.

As it happens with all people who challenge a field of investigation and knowledge, there are some detractors who use to associate Renzulli’s model as one defining giftedness based on performance or achievement without understanding what the world “potential” means. And even the “necessity of showing a logical relationship between definitions on the one hand and recommended identification and programming practices on the other” (Renzulli, 2005, p. 249).

Those who say Renzulli has no identification model seem to purposely fail to acknowledge the Scales for Rating the Behavioural Characteristics of Superior Students (SRBCSS) (Renzulli et al., 2002, 2010), the Multi Criteria System for the Identification of High Achieving and Creative/Productive Giftedness (Renzulli & Gaesser, 2015), the Practical System for Identifying Gifted and Talented Students (1990), the Assessment for Learning: The Missing Element for Identifying High Potential in Low Income and Minority Groups (2021), all interest-A-lyzers and so many other papers on identification.

Identification, not diagnosis

Most Latin-American countries are still processing the old seventies ideas, using IQ tests scores to classify gifted persons and requiring high (academic) results to refer students to the scarce gifted education programs or services, when they exist. When schools call or refer to healthcare professionals to declare if their students are gifted or not they usually are “diagnosed” not “identified”, but, which code they would use? There is not a giftedness code in the DSM-5, just because it is a Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of *Mental Disorders* which is not the case of giftedness. The IQ tests are still used as the major and most important labeling instruments. They are expensive, elitist, unfair and insufficient to identify giftedness and, as a result, miss most gifted students who should receive the needed services.

> The danger here is, of course, that we maybe systematically excluding high potential students from culturally diverse backgrounds or students who have shown signs of high potential in areas other than the high verbal, mathematical, or analytic skills measured by standardized tests. (Renzulli, 2016, p. 99)

> There are certain unavoidable pitfalls that we are bound to stumble into if we accept the belief that giftedness can be defined by 3 to 5% of the normal curve. […] if we accept the 3 to 5% myth, then we will implicitly and operationally also accept the equally unsupportable myth that giftedness and IQ are the same thing. (Renzulli, 1986, p. 27)

Sternberg, Jarvin and Grigorenko (2011) asked "Why would psychometrically-based constructs play such a major role in identification?" (p. 17) and have listed and argued against 15 different ideas about IQ or psychometric *g* or scores on similar tests such as the SAT[3] or ACT[4] as suitable instruments to assess giftedness, finally concluding that "IQ has much going for it as a model for identifying the gifted, but there is at least some evidence that supplementing it would make sense" (Ibidem, p. 24).

> […] we are willing to rethink identification as a talent development process rather a labeling process—some students are "gifted" and receive all of the services, and some are not, and therefore received nothing but a prescribed one-size-fit-all curriculum. A talent development process means that we will do our "universal screening" by looking at the interests, strengths, motivation, and a broad range of other co-cognitive skills in our total school population and provide appropriate services when there is recognized potential in any areas of interest or strength. To do this, we must use a variety of assessment instruments and procedures that look at many different cognitive and non-cognitive potentials. (Renzulli, 2021, p. 8)
>
> *I think that the instruments that are used to identify students for programs for the gifted almost always fall along the line of - again - what I call schoolhouse giftedness or lesson learning giftedness.*
>
> *We use test scores and, almost always cognitive ability test scores such as IQ tests and achievement tests; however, I believe that there should also be some other things that we look at in young people that are non-test score information but are very important in the development of creative-productive giftedness. It's called Assessment for Learning versus Assessment of Learning. Tests tell us what children already know, that's assessment of learning. Assessment for Learning tells us skills that young people might have that will encourage us to provide opportunities, resources, and encouragement for that particular young child.*
>
> *And these things fall into four categories.*

[3] Scholastic Assessment (or Aptitude) Test
[4] American College Testing

The first, and always the most important is interest. And that's why over the years I have developed many instruments, which are called Interest-A-Lyzers, including very young children, elementary children, and high school students. I've even had some adult Interest-A-Lyzers. When people in adulthood call me and say they're not happy with their life or their work, I send them an adult Interest-A-Lyzer to see if they can analyze themselves. What kind of books do they read? What kind of recreational activities do they take part in, what kind of places do they go to visit? Who do they associate with? And I think that interests are always the most important part of gathering information about creative-productive giftedness.

The second thing that I've developed some instruments on, relates to how does one learn best. We call it learning styles. And some children learn best by sitting and listening and taking notes and answering questions on a test, very formal. That's truer of lesson learning giftedness than creative-productive giftedness. Others learn more by being directly involved in small groups with hands-on activities, building something, writing something, creating something. And I think that this is also a way that we should modify our teaching to give young people an opportunity to do more than read the book, take notes from the teacher and answer questions on the test.

The third thing, which is also very important, is expression styles. And I've developed an instrument on expression styles called My Way, (named after the Frank Sinatra song "I did it my way)" and one of the things that I found is that a child may not like to write things, but would draw them or do cartoons or make graphic models, because they are very visually oriented as far as the type of products that they like to pursue. And I think that, it's very important if I know how a child wants to express herself or himself, I can work backwards from there and say, well, why don't you build a model of that, so that you can demonstrate your mechanical idea? Or why don't you make a drawing or draw a cartoon that explains how you feel about this particular political point of view.

The fourth thing is a series of things that I call executive function skills. And we're currently doing a research project on an instrument that will measure those skills. And they consist of things like planning, organizing, learning how to work cooperatively with others, setting goals, having empathy, being a good listener, learning how to share resources and information. All of the things that have made people successful in creative-productive giftedness are generally people who have these kinds of executive function skills.

Gardner (1999) said "intelligence is too important to be left to intelligence testers" (p. 3) and Renzulli (2016) cautions us "about the dangers of trying to describe intelligence through the use of single scores, it seems safe to conclude that this practice has been and always will be questionable" (p. 61).

We should identify students not for the purpose of labeling them, but to serve them educationally. In our experience in Uruguay, at the Grupo de Investigación en Altas Habilidades/Superdotación (GIAHSD), a research group created in 2018 at the School of Educational Sciences of Universidad de la Empresa, our main goal when we identify children, adolescents and adults is giving them the possibility of becoming

happy gifted persons, which means being recognized, accepted, respected and valorized. To achieve this goal, we perform a long identification process using different qualitative instruments in addition to those developed by Bendelman and Pérez-Barrera (2018a, 2018b) - self-nominations, peer nominations, parents, siblings and teachers nominations - interviews with the person who is being identified, their parents and/or mothers, partners, teachers, psychologists, psychiatrists, autobiographies and all kinds of additional stakeholders who could help us to prepare a detailed report for the children/adolescents' family, school (if the family desires so) and the adult.

Gifted education: the message to Latin-American educators and governments

We mentioned before those detractors saying that Renzulli has no gifted education model while they fail to acknowledge the Curriculum Compacting, the Enrichment Triad Model,the Total Talent Portfolio (1998), the Triad Enrichment Model, Enrichment Clusters (Renzulli, Gentry, Reis, 2021) and the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (Renzulli & Reis, 1997, 2014), among many other alternatives, not only proposed, but also implemented.

As Sternberg (2016) refers:

> Joe has been unique in seeing more positive outreach and implementation of his ideas than any other scholar I can think of. His ideas combine scholarly integrity with practical applicability. Other scholars have seen their ideas implemented, but usually in limited ways and for short periods of time. […] In Joe's case, the implementation have spread because they are teachable to teachers, practical to implement, fun for students, and most of all, because they work. (p. xiv)

And so, that's really what I think, is the most important message that I would like to deliver to the educators in Latin America. And by the way, all of the work that I talked about is accessible and can be translated into other languages. Many of the instruments have been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, French, German and Chinese.

So I think that what all of this boils down to, Susana, is that we need to develop a strength based profile for each and every child that comes into our classroom and we can do this with the instruments that I just mentioned. We also have built these instruments into our Renzulli learning system, which is translatable into Spanish, it can be used in Spanish speaking countries. And, so I believe that this is the only way that we can increase the world's reservoir of creative-productive people: knowing what their strengths are in the areas that I just mentioned, and then also being able to provide them with what I call the concept of ORE: opportunities, resources, and encouragement in their particular areas of strength and interest. That's where creative-productive giftedness comes from.

Now when it comes to comparing the numbers on how many are in each group, in the first group that is said, usually by academic people, by government, ministries of education or policy makers, 1%, 3%, 5%. It differs all over the place. When it comes to creative-productive giftedness, however, we simply do not

know how many people fall into that category. What we do know is that people in that category are the people who have made significant contributions to whatever area of study or work in which they are involved in. So, it's not that I can turn around and say there are more creative or less creative-productive people in any given population. It's the kind of things that we do to promote these kinds of gifted behaviors in young people that give us a greater reservoir of future contributors to the arts, history, science, literature, culture of society.

Indeed, as Renzulli (2016) remembered "we must guard against defining intelligence solely in terms of ability to pass the tests of a given intelligence scale' (Terman et al., 1926, p. 131). E. L. Thorndike echoed Terman's concern by stating that 'to assume that we have measured some general power which resides in [the person being tested] and determines his ability in every variety of intellectual task in its entirety is to fly directly in the face of all that is known about the organization of the intellect' (Thorndike, 1921, p. 126)" (p. 62).

In addition to the myth that makes people believe that giftedness is equivalent to intelligence and then it can be measured by a standardized IQ tests, another myth that we usually have to face is that presuming there are more gifted students only in private schools or that the number of gifted students is naturally higher in those institutions. If the instruments used to identify giftedness require good linguistic and mathematical skills to bring high scores, the better the cultural background (and usually the family income), the higher the scores obtained in standardized tests.

Whether or not there are more gifted persons in public or private schools, again, you have to look at it in those two categories. People with higher IQs oftentimes come from more affluent families that can afford private schools. They have had better everything from prenatal nutrition to tutors, to providing resources for their children, to books, they read to their children, books at night and, they take children to see many different kinds of things, and so, obviously, they will show up better on any standardized test, whether it's an IQ test or whether it's an achievement test. It is very hard to say, but we would find more schoolhouse or high lesson learning giftedness in private schools.

When it comes to creative-productive giftedness, we simply don't know. A poor child who may have experienced difficulties in life and learned from his or her mode of survival that they may have come up with many creative ideas. A young girl from a very poor family in Mexico that I read about and looked into recently, was always sad that she could not take a hot bath because there was no hot water in her village. So, she invented a solar water heater out of using plastic bags and plastic tubing and pipes. And she actually created a very inexpensive way to heat hot water for poor people. The wood in the area had all been used up to heat water, so there was no way of heating water with fire. So I would offer that as a perfect example of creative-productive giftedness. Now, I have many, many examples of those kinds of things and in my study of giftedness, I also studied adults and what were influences in their childhood that caused them to end up inventing something or writing something or doing some work that was very, very original. So, I believe that it is the background of young people that causes them to become inspired to develop new ideas, like the little girl that I just mentioned.

Unfortunately, in Latin America, our governments are still not interested in attending to gifted students. It's very difficult to make them understand that high abilities/giftedness are not just good achievement in schools and, in countries where there are many poor people, for example, they use to notice those students who show academic achievement, but do not see those who maybe are not so good for the society but are also gifted. This is what I have partially assessed in a study on giftedness among juvenile offenders which has been outlined in UConn and frustrated by the pandemic. None of the youngsters who have shown giftedness indicators in the screening instrument were considered gifted by the detention centers teachers, instructors or administrators. (Pérez-Barrera, 2019)

> *Well, I think that one of the things that governments are interested in is not the thing that I would like them to be interested in - first is education- but they're not. They're mostly interested in the economy, and what I try to get across to ministry officials and government policy makers is that the kinds of creative-productive giftedness that I'm talking about is a natural resource for a country just like oil or coal or iron or timber; that the most successful countries in the world with the best economies are the countries that have used the creativity and intelligence and motivation of people to create businesses, to create products. And I think that the economy in countries is driven by resources and there are two kinds of resources, natural resources, which eventually run out: if your country has a lot of oil, that will run out someday. But one resource that doesn't run out is the creative and intellectual capital of young people. And so, imagine, for example, that someone in a country, in Argentina for example, has decided that we ought to be building cars, we have to import our cars from America and from Europe and from Asia and we ought to be starting our very modern car making industry. And think of the amount of jobs that would be created in Argentina. Did you ever drive a car that was built in Argentina? I doubt it. So, suppose Argentina started building cars, or as Italy did after the loss of World War II, they started to do a lot of design in things like fashion and cutlery and now they build the best boats and yachts in the world. They design these beautiful boats. Anybody buying a very expensive yacht today, it will - I guarantee you - be made in Italy.*
>
> *And so, I think that these are the kinds of things that policy makers, government officials and business leaders must understand that you invest in this human capital and it takes a long time and a lot of good educational resources to develop that capital. Think of people in the United States like Bill Gates or Steve Jobs or Steven Spielberg, people who have started industries or businesses or - in Spielberg's case - a very famous movie maker, all of his movies have not only contributed to the economy of our country, but it has created thousands and thousands of different jobs for people who are interested in disseminating movies or films. You have to think of these young people as an example of human capital and developing that capital, develops a successful economy.*

I shared my thoughts with Dr. Renzulli, about some careful observations I have made of people who, for example, are musicians and I notice a difference between those musicians who perform or interpret music and those who compose music. Therefore, I think that there are some academic abilities in those who perform and interpret music and creative productivity in those who compose music. My hypothesis

is that we could find both types of giftedness in every field of human behavior like arts, sports, dance, music, language, science or math. For example, an academic scientist may write papers and make deductions but a productive-creative scientist may use their lab to do experiments and finally make an impressive discovery. The same for a dancer: an academic dancer is one who reproduces a movement, with perfectly exquisite and complex movements, while a creative-productive dancer creates movements intuitively and performs their dance so emotionally that it makes you cry.

> *Well, I think your example is a perfect example. The person who composes music also creates opportunities for thousands, maybe millions of people to buy that music, to play that music, to have musical performances and it is – again - something where an idea contributes to the social and cultural as well as economic development of a society. A person who writes a wonderful book, for example, that lots and lots of people read, they're contributing to the social, cultural and economic development of that society. And, imagine if we had no composers, there would be no nothing but repetitive kind of music.*
>
> *I think that what's happening in a lot of places is that they are only looking at children with high IQ scores. And what the research clearly shows, especially among highly successful adults, is that many of the people that have made important contributions to society, would never have gotten into a gifted program as a child. I've read biographies, which have always been one of my favorite things since I was a child. I've read the biographies of many famous people in everything from science to sports, to music and it's very clear interestingly that many of them were not good at the first kind of giftedness that I mentioned: schoolhouse or lesson learning giftedness, they were very involved in some special area of interest. That's why interest always leads my list of how we go about not identifying if a child is gifted or not gifted, but rather if we should provide that child, with again, the opportunities, resources, and encouragement to develop their proficiency in that particular area. That's where gifted behaviors come from and why I have included task commitment in the Three Ring conception of giftedness.*

A paper was presented in the last conference of the European Council for High Ability (Pérez & Chagas, 2022) on the preliminary data on a study with 103 adults from nine different Latin-American countries. We especially asked about socioemotional aspects and what these gifted adults think about their own identification process. We are now extending the sample to many other countries including Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, United States, and Uruguay and it will certainly give us much information about what these adults have experienced at school and in their early and present life. In the first sample, there were people who had had up to seven different psychiatric or psychological diagnoses before being identified as gifted and then realized these diagnoses were wrong. It is a very complex situation because there are people who have spent all their lives thinking they were autistic, depressive, bipolar, had ADHD, AD, OCD, ODD, anxiety or any other psychological or psychiatric conditions or even were considered twice exceptional, although not always were.

Hoping Not to Finish, But to Begin Deeper Discussions in the South

Very frequently, Latin-American researchers, educators and governments – specially Ministries of Education looked for foreign theories to apply in their school systems. Generally, they fail to develop good practices, because theories need to be thought, discussed, improved and applied with Latin-American rhythms.

One day, Joe told me he was considering to avoid the "G" word, because, as we all know, gifted persons do not feel comfortable with it, especially due to the social prejudices and myths. "High potential" would be a possible replacement for giftedness, he thought. In developing countries where gifted programs are part of the educational system, there might not be a difference between one word or the other, but in Latin-American countries, where identification is still not a common practice and gifted education even less, we need to clearly identify gifted students as such in order to demand gifted education. Softer words could be better accepted by gifted persons, but educational systems will certainly identify only high achievers among them and will not develop special programs.

I lived part of my life in Brazil, where dressing in colors is a common practice. When I came back to my country, Uruguay, I wondered why people looked at my colorful clothes in such a strange way. One day, I stood up in the corner of one of the most crowdy streets of the capital and looking along with my eyes half-closed I understood Montevideo's black-white-gray-and-beige color trend. I had to learn how to adapt to this new reality and mix colors in a different way.

When we move to a new country, we have to learn its language, its culture, its habits and costumes. In the same way, Latin-American governments need to learn how to nurture their educators with all kinds of theories and practices from all around the world but prepare them to adjust their practices or even develop their own strategies according to their reality. There are many interesting experiences to serve gifted students in our countries, sometimes put in practice by few passionate educators with scarce resources, even in low-income and rural contexts. We need to share them with our Latin-American neighbors, but also with the rest of the world, because these experiences are significant, innovative and could help other colleagues elsewhere.

I wish we could all develop the respectful mind Gardner (2007) has defined as one which "notes and welcomes differences between human individuals and between human groups, tries to understand these 'others', and seeks to work effectively with them. In a world where we are all interlinked, intolerance or disrespect is no longer a viable option" (p. 3).

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