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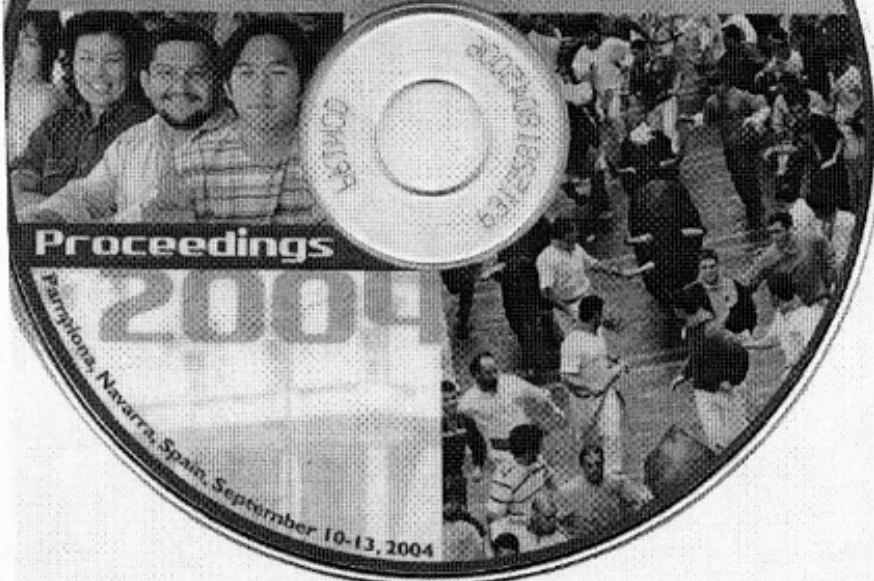
***From Information Age
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EDUCATIONAL VALUES WITHIN THE GREEK SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMUNITY AND EDUCATIONAL PROVISION FOR THE GIFTED

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Values are defined as abstract ideas, positive or negative, that represent ideal beliefs about modes of conduct and ideal terminal goals (Rokeach, 1968). At a macro level of thinking, Kluckhohn (1951, p. 395) defines values as “conceptions of the desirable means and ends of action”, within a certain society. So, values are not restricted to moral beliefs that an individual or a group might accept, but they express what people believe they “ought” or “should” desire to do, in terms of the available social rules and norms. Within an individual’s belief system, which contains ideologies, values, opinions and attitudes, values compose a substructure, organized hierarchically in terms of the importance of each value separately (Rokeach, 1968; 1973, 1979; Rokeach & Ball-Rokeach, 1989). The term “educational values” could be defined as the societal rules that refer to the means of learning and being educated within a society that influence both individual and group decisions (Gari & Kalantzi–Azizi, 1998; Lasswell, 1957).

The present study highlights Greek high school teachers’ and students’ educational values towards the gifted, in comparison to parents’ values. It focuses on educational values of three significant educational groups of the Greek secondary education regarding educational provision and development of the gifted students. A question rising refers to the general agreement or disagreement among the three groups of respondents towards various educational issues of gifted students and a possible specific orientation of each group. It is noteworthy that these three specific groups in Greece are minimally aware on issues about gifted pupils’ education, especially parents (Gari, 2002, June). Facing the future perspective of designing and implementing programs for the educational provision for the gifted in Greece, it could be useful to previously clarify how these three groups understand giftedness, by assessing their positions and values on special educational programmes for the gifted, educational practices, and the general orientation of the provision for pupils with potential to succeed in various domains. In the relevant literature, it is well known that teachers’ ratings for the gifted students seem to be, not surprisingly in many cases, good predictors of later achievement of the gifted in school, while the gifted children parents’ judgements seem not to be good predictors of future achievement, by mostly overestimating their children’s giftedness or by underestimating it, especially when the parents themselves are highly-educated (Trost, 2000).

A previous study within the primary school environment (Gari & Mylonas, 2002, October), suggested that teachers, parents and university students as future primary school educationalists accept normal schooling for gifted students and the indispensable importance of equality in educational opportunities. In respect to the ideal of equal educational opportunities, parents seem to understand them as a kind of conformity to the abilities of average pupils, more than the other two groups. The concept of equal opportunities at school may be associated with relevant values of social equality and democracy or with what is socially “desirable” (Kluckhohn, 1951, p. 395) or “socially regular” (Furnham, 1988). However, primary school teachers seem to realize more than the other two groups, the association between differentiation of the gifted pupils’ abilities and the respective educational opportunities. In general, among the three groups there seem to be differences, as teachers’ and parents’ attitude is in favor of educational provision for the gifted, while

university students tend to suggest that gifted students are in more risk of psychosocial problems than parents and teachers do.

Secondary school environment confronts with a more complicated educational environment, as the adolescent gifted students, in their efforts for autonomy, independence and individuality face a variety of difficulties, such as to find their own mentors among the non-gifted adults of their environment, develop their potential without being “out of the average mainstream” and make their own non-conformative professional decisions for the future; and these difficulties seem to be much stronger for the gifted girls (Buescher, 1985; Hollinger, 1991). Specifically, the students’ academic and professional decisions that are included in the final two years of the Greek high school attendance, along with the panhellenic exams for entering the university and the generally overloaded high school syllabus, increase the educational complexity of secondary education. Therefore, psychological and professional counseling programs for high school students, their parents and teachers become necessary (Colangelo, 1991). However, the lack of such programs along with the lack of any kind of educational provision for the gifted in the Greek secondary education and the whole system of Greek education increases the difficulties and obstacles for the development of the gifted potential.

Method

The samples participating in this study were of three discrete groups: high school *Students* (n=160), high school *Teachers* (n=110) from various districts of Athens and *Parents* with high school children (n=120) from Athens (n=50, 15 fathers and 35 mothers) and a small town, Kalavrita, 250km south-west of Athens (n=70, 27 fathers and 43 mothers). Females and males were not represented unequally within each of these three groups ($\chi^2 = 4.16$, $df = 2$, NS). The methods of assessing values the participants hold for gifted children and giftedness were devised on the basis of an initial pool of 123 items which were the outcome of interviews initially conducted with 34 educationalists. These 123 items were administered to 45 university students and were then item-analyzed resulting into three different final pools of items, one for high-school students, one for high-school teachers and one for parents. The comparable (identical) items for all three samples were 18 and these were used in the following analyses. Questionnaires were administered to high school students in groups and to teachers individually, at school environment. Parents responded to the questionnaire either at school environment or at home, returning it within a few days.

Results

The 18 value items were first described for their distributions and their basic statistics and were then analyzed through principal components and factor analyses models (principal axis factoring) for the total pool of the 390 participants. Both solutions were rotated orthogonally but their interpretation was rather unclear and lead to non-salient factors in the structures. Although some of this discrepancy could be attributed to skewness in some of the distributions, this was not the only cause, since different factor structures might hold for the three discrete groups of participants; thus, equivalence issues should be clarified in respect to the overall factor structure in the data, before proceeding to the next step in the analyses. To do so, we computed a three-factor structure for each of the three groups and overall (principal components analysis with orthogonal rotation) in order to compare these structures by means of congruence coefficients (*Tucker Phi*). The decision to compute three factors was based on the previous factor structures mostly indicating three possibly salient factors in the data. For these comparisons, the students factor structure showed two identical factors and one similar factor with the overall structure; the teachers factor structure showed one identical and two similar factors with the overall structure; the same was true for the

parents factor structure. However, the teachers and parents samples had no identical factors at all, whereas the students factor structure had one identical and one similar factor with both the teachers and the parents factor structures.

After this equivalence analysis, it seemed first that there were somewhat stronger 'ties' between the students and the teachers factor structures but looser ones when it came to parents. In order to gain more insight, we computed for each group separately unifactorial solutions (a single principal component), in order to depict the items that needed reversing before computing reliability coefficients for three separate data sets –one for each group– of 18 items. For the students and the teachers groups, these estimates were satisfactory, showing stability in the responses ($>.65$). However, this was not true for the parents' responses, which were shown of being highly unreliable, possibly due to methodological and metric artefacts. This exploratory analysis was followed by close inspection of each group's correlation matrix and by comparing them for their statistical significance through *Fisher z* transformations. Although there were no strong differences in the magnitude of the indices, many reversed indices were observed for the parents' correlation matrix in respect to the other two correlation matrices; this finding indicated once again that the factor structure for parents might not be equivalent to the other two groups' structure and that it might be analyzed separately. The other two groups could be analyzed as a set in order to achieve some overall structure.

To test for such a possibility further, we formed combined pairs of groups (students-teachers, students-parents, and teachers-parents), for each pair of groups we computed three-factor structures (principal components with orthogonal rotation of the axes) and attempted to conceptually identify the factors in each solution. The best identifiable solution was the one that was computed on the students-teachers combined sample. Another criterion that also supported possible differences in the structure of the parents' answers was the *Tucker Phi* coefficients calculated for each pair of solutions; the only case where not all three factors were identical –as it would naturally be expected when half of the variance is common, e.g. students-teachers and students-parents samples have the 'students' part in common– was the comparisons of the students-parents and the teachers-parents factor structures, where for one factor in each pair there was no match in the other. Such a finding supported further that the parents' responses were to be treated separately in the analyses and that the students-teachers factor structure should be examined as an 'overall' factor structure for these two groups only. To stabilize for metric inequivalences further, we computed the z-scores for each item for each of the two groups in the analyses and we then computed the final factor structure for these combined groups. This factor structure is presented in Table 1. Reliability estimates for these factors, although not so strong, were considered adequate for the descriptive and exploratory purposes of this study (.68, .63, and .55 for factors 1 to 3, respectively).

These three factors were named as follows: a) Teachers' and parents' provision for the educational and social needs of the gifted, b) Mainstream versus special education of the gifted, and c) Finding the golden pedagogic mean for the gifted. At this stage, analysis of variance results between the two groups, or between males and females, are of no importance. However, a final note should be drawn on the separate factor structure present in the parents' responses. For this structure, the third factor was the same with the "Finding the golden pedagogic mean for the gifted" factor in the students-teachers structure. The other two factors though are rather similar but not identical to the two remaining factors in the students-teachers structure. This is because some other items intervene in the first and some other items in the second factors altering their identities; also, switches in the loadings directions are present.

Table 1. Factor analysis solution for the combined students-teachers group

	<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>
Opportunities for high achievement should be readily available for the gifted adolescents	.69	-.12	.13
Teachers and parents should receive special education on the gifted adolescents' needs	.69	-.21	.01
Teachers and parents of gifted adolescents should receive psychological support in dealing with the gifted students' needs	.55	-.28	-.06
Teachers and parents of gifted high school students should be in closer cooperation	.52	-.11	-.31
Special opportunities should be available for the gifted adolescents when it comes to occupational counseling	.51	-.07	-.28
The gifted adolescent should be encouraged to make friends with any child in school	.43	.18	.06
Teachers and parents should guide the gifted children towards associating with children with similar interests, even if these children are of older age	.35	.01	-.01
Parents should help their gifted adolescent to develop his/her special abilities, even if this requires a large amount of effort by all family members	.33	-.09	.06
The gifted adolescent should not just study all the time but also pursue other activities	.30	.16	.11
All adolescents should have the same educational opportunities, thus gifted students should receive similar education with all other students	-.24	.73	.02
Gifted adolescents should enrol their own special school	.07	-.72	.07
Gifted adolescents should be treated the same way as every other child within family and classroom.	-.11	.56	.02
Gifted adolescents should enrol normal schools but with special enrichment programs	.37	.43	.17
Motivation offered by teachers and parents should not lead gifted adolescents to burn out.	-.07	-.07	.65
Teachers and parents should not be indifferent to gifted adolescents' educational needs, by underestimating gifted students' abilities	.17	-.05	.64
Not too much pressure should be placed on the gifted adolescents by overestimating their abilities	-.02	.09	.53
Teachers and parents should safeguard against the gifted adolescent becoming arrogant	.17	.18	.49
A male gifted student should –no matter what– exploit his giftedness to achieve occupational goals	.24	.26	-.44
Variance explained by each factor (total variance explained: 35.11%)	14.6%	10.5%	10.0%

Discussion

Educational value structures on giftedness between high school students, teachers and parents seem to be more similar than different. All three groups seem to understand the demand for both family and school of accepting the gifted adolescents' abilities without over- or under-estimating them. However, high school teachers and students seem to understand in a more similar way and from a more clear viewpoint, in comparison to parents, the Kluckhohn "desirable" for the gifted adolescents' by means of needs and educational provision. Thus, they seem to accept for the gifted adolescents the values of attending mainstream education, receiving similar education at high school and at home. "Similarity" at home and at school is a concept that is likely to express the equal opportunity principle. On the contrary, both high school teachers and students seem to accept values that differentiate the gifted adolescents from the peer group, by accepting their need –in the areas of social activity and academic achievement– for special opportunities, for professional counseling and for special encouragement, within family and school settings. In general, high school teachers' and students' educational values seem to have been formulated over time a) for teachers, as a function of teaching experience (Breubeck, 1971) and b) for students, as the effect of being socialized by the secondary education system. It could be argued that high school educational reality may better prepare both teachers and students towards the gifted students needs, while it does not influence parents in the same way, as they are watching educational matters from a distance. Additionally, these findings for teachers' values in comparison to the parental ones are partly supported by previous findings

regarding the Greek primary school teachers' and parents' educational values and attitudes (Gari & Mylonas, 2002, October); the great percentage of the primary school teachers (47%) seemed to believe in pupils' individual differences and understand equality of educational opportunities through differentiation of pupils' abilities, but the majority of parents (52.6%) seemed to conceptualize educational equal opportunities as provision shaped according to the average students' abilities. Such a conceptualization of equality in educational opportunities may be influenced by a broader and more vague idea of democratic allocation of educational resources, familiar to cultural contexts with specific sociopolitical characteristics (Edfeldt, 2002; Pagnin, 2002).

Concluding, high school teachers' and students' educational values seem to be an unprepared but fertile ground for planning and implementing educational programs for the gifted adolescents at Greek high schools. Specific teachers training programs for the education of the gifted, pre- and in-service ones, along with effective primary prevention programs for students might have influenced their beliefs in a more cohesive and stable manner. On the other hand, parental values that seem to be distant from the other two groups' values may illuminate effects of the Greek culture along with some social class and permanent residence characteristics related to childrearing practices (Goodnow, 1984). Therefore, it could also be supposed that Greek parents are poorly informed on the gifted children needs and abilities. Thus, parents would be generally indifferent to various educational practices and programs for the gifted, except for the gifted pupils' parents or those parents who might think that their children are gifted. In future research, educational values for the educational provision of the gifted could be examined under a cross-cultural perspective, thus exploring for the cultural differentiations of values among various groups within the school community towards the social demands for the welfare of the gifted.

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