

Diversity and Gifted Education: four Brazilian examples¹

Dr. Christina Cupertino
Universidade Paulista, Brazil

Dr. Zenita Guenther
CEDET, Brazil

Dr. Cristina Delou
Universidade Federal Fluminense, Brazil

Susana Pérez
AGAAHSD, Brazil

Introduction

This chapter is addressed to those people involved with the education of the highly able/gifted. We intend to narrate different experiences developed in different places within Brazil. Our goal is offering the readers the opportunity to find possible resonances, which could help them in their own practice, from the identification of similarities between their specific field of action and ours.

Authors frequently refer the impasses educators experience when trying to understand and incorporate the advances reported in the researches within the area to their daily practice. Most researchers, upon their generalization needs, stay apart from the contexts generating the data, which are quantitatively organized and presented, because of the procedures considered reliable by the traditional methodology. Under this approach, researches do not reflect the day-by-day experienced by educators, who do not know how to improve their results.

¹ A condensed version of this article was published in WALLACE, B.; ERIKSSON, G. Diversity in gifted education – international perspectives on global issues. London: Routledge, 2006, pp. 158-64.

This leads educators to a “logic of experimentation, disappointment and abdication” (Hédoux, 1994). In other words, even in those rare cases where educators are able to access recent findings within their field, they end disappointed when realizing that practice is much more complex than the theory which has to account for it. As a result, they abandon this source of knowledge considering it useless to solve their problems.

Another perspective adopted by Educational Studies is more recent and qualitative and develops towards two different directions. There are studies resulting from other fields of knowledge, aiming at Education. In those cases, the problem of transferring the results to the situations experienced by the Educators still remains. And, there are also works, which describe and examine the specific contexts where certain practices occur. Under the traditional scientific point of view, this kind of work is submitted to criticism, because it is oriented to “particular experiences”, and due to the absence of objective validation criteria allowing what could be considered a safe generalization.

Therefore, changes in educational research range from a neutral and distant-of-the-experience perspective to an approach where the researcher’s involvement is intense, and where validity criteria have another nature.

In Brazil, this paradigmatic scission conditions scientific and technologic development policies and those intended for Education, severely affecting educators’ education, which is subjected to ambivalent positionings (Ribeiro, 2003). It also affects the offer of Special Education programs, as the positioning of those implementing them, added to other factors, will define their shaping and procedures, as it will be shown in the different services presented in this chapter.

Brazilian Gifted Education: the common ground

An overview of the field of Gifted Education over the past five or six decades shows noticeable progress. An extensive body of research has been developed, offering a basis for diversified practices. Also we seem to have

reached a consensus around the idea that systematic intervention is indeed necessary to encourage the development of talent and ability in children.

The acceptance of such a principle is mainly expressed in two ways: by pointing out the need to provide an educational process tailored to the individual attributes of each student, which necessarily includes highly able/gifted children (SEESP-MEC, 1994), or by expressing a growing faith in human talent as a resource for the improvement of the quality of life in today's world. More recently, a concern has been added about the loss of talent and potential, that remains undeveloped due to the lack of education, or is guided toward destructive antisocial activities (Antipoff, 1992). Such worries and concerns are reflected in the educational legislation of several countries including Brazil, primarily in the establishment of provisions that specifically aim at meeting the needs of highly able/gifted students.

In the Brazilian case, however, we also note that legal enforcement is not so widespread as it would be desirable due to some prejudices that must be dealt with on a daily basis. In Brazil, periods of democracy have alternated - more often than we would wish - with periods of dictatorship, continuously obliging us to reconstruct the meaning of citizenship. In this process, "equal opportunities" may mean offering the same educational conditions to all, independently of their specific abilities. This problem is aggravated by constant and generalized deprivation affecting the majority of the population. It is common to observe prejudices regarding highly able/gifted children, assumed as individuals who are already privileged by possessing exceptional ability and higher potential, therefore capable of fulfilling this potential on their own, without needing any assistance to do so. This inhibits endeavors to work with them, who are deemed to be privileged by definition (Cupertino, 1998).

Advances in the construction of a theoretical framework for gifted education may also be noticed. For instance, studies on identification procedures, which used to take up a large part of the research effort, are being expanded by the diversification of concepts and acceptance of non-quantifiable strategies such

as guided observation, self-referral, or checklists to detect indicators of talent and high ability (Freeman, 2003). Studies on intelligence and creativity are broadening and deepening what is known about these phenomena and clarifying how they can be affected through educational actions. At the same time, as scientific knowledge grows, old myths and beliefs are being dispelled, also tending to reflect on the educational practices with highly able/gifted children.

However, sharing this knowledge is a problematic issue, as pointed out before. The observation of routines of educational events, congresses and seminars, and even some teachers' training programs within our country, evidences the educational model adopted by the official institutions is oriented to disclose rules and manuals intending to guide their application, added to the claim that teachers are insensible to changes, impairing progress. It is not considered that proposals are downwardly imposed, alienating educators from any discussion or decision-making process, where they could expose their specificities and ways of acting, so different within a continental country having many different regional and population characteristics.

Servicing diversity is a complex issue, as it involves not only learning specific educational topics, but also personal attitudes, prejudices and values, mostly unknown by the practitioners themselves, which sometimes prevent educators from considering differences as a source of exchange and growth, but otherwise, as an obstacle for the right development of the work they have to carry out (Cupertino, Forghieri & Bernardo, 2000; Cupertino, 2003). This is quite applicable to gifted services, where laws and procedures are stated, while the implementation of measures and programs addressed to these persons are still restrained to rare initiatives by obstinated aware professionals in the field.

Considering our goal is approaching readers to issues related to diversity, and that, rather than neutral reports distant from daily reality, we can encourage identification moments with those people experiencing working conditions similar to ours, we decided to present some gifted service alternative experiences

already consolidated in Brazil, focusing their functioning, their theoretical grounds, their impasses and achievements.

Thus, we expect to show how the programs approach to their goal of promoting the development of their target-public as, sometimes starting from the same theoretical references and service models, they are able to identify the specific needs of the regions where they are developed, respecting the specific population characteristics and the available resources, articulating all these aspects and assuring their endurance and credibility by the permanent knowledge production shared in several instances.

Center for Potential and Talent Development - CEDET²

A Community Center for Talent Development

One of the main concerns in orienting the work at the Center for Potential and Talent Development – CEDET is the recognition of what Gallagher (1997) pointed out, that most of the knowledge remains largely on the level of literature and peer communication within the Academy, and it fails reaching its final destination, which ought to be the highly able/gifted children in the schools.

The main avenues open to educational planning for the highly able/gifted children are: setting blocks of activities within the school context and organizing out-of-school programs. Activities within Brazilian schools include special schools for the highly able/gifted (Guenther, Carvalho & Silva, 1985), separated space for resource rooms in the schools (Delou, 2001), curriculum modification leading to diversified activities for groups of highly able/gifted children (MEC/SEESP, 2002), situational and independent extracurricular activities. Out-of-school initiatives include projects and programs involving work within University settings

² Centro para o Desenvolvimento do Potencial e Talento. <http://www.aspat.ufla.br>

and Education Departments, or groups and associations. The Center for Potential and Talent Development - CEDET is a type of out-of-school program (Guenther, 2000).

Joan Freeman's 2002 study on out-of-school programs for the highly able/gifted around the world emphasized certain difficulties in evaluating different programs to establish which type of provision would be most appropriate for a given situation. The author advises, "*it would not seem wise to copy any action from one culture to another without recognizing inevitable differences in background and outlook.*" (Freeman, 2003, p. 209). This point was carefully considered when we started planning CEDET.

Since 1972, Brazilian legal provisions acknowledge the presence of exceptionally highly able/gifted students as a concern for the area of Special Education (Federal Law Nr. 5692). However, the treatment given to the subject up to now shows scarce knowledge of the field (Law 9394, 1996) in the sense that it has not been enough studied. While Special Education for the handicapped is presented in specific categories regarding various areas of impairment such as physical, sensorial, mental, social, language and behavioral disorders, the same does not happen when treating the highly able/gifted students (CNE-CEB, 2001). Thus, in the law, all expressions of human talents and abilities, which determine differentiated educational needs, are grouped under one general word such as "high abilities" or "giftedness". We have noticed that, as a consequence, teachers fail to recognize highly able/gifted students within the classroom, except, perhaps, when they show some kind of achievement in Arts, such as drawing or dancing.

The situation is further aggravated when official provisions for gifted education suggest strategies originally developed for the handicapped, on the grounds that both categories fall under "Special Education". By employing such analogies in dealing with opposite types of diversity, we risk reaching the same results: *minimizing the characteristics determining the difference* (Gallagher, 1997). In the case of giftedness, educational action may need to be the opposite

of what is provided for other special students, and any other option implies lessening the potential and talent we wish to develop (Kulic and Kulic, 1991 in Gallagher, 1997). Nevertheless, Brazilian law does advocate the presence of specialized support in all situations of special education within the schools; therefore the extant knowledge developed within each field should be called upon to guide all educational practices. From this point of view, the organization and operational dynamics of CEDET stand solely on the knowledge developed and implemented within the specific field of Gifted and Talented Education.

CEDET Conception and theoretical framework

CEDET conception and organization are derived from the basis encountered in the education humanistic thinking, as expressed by Helena Antipoff, Abraham Maslow, Art Combs, and their followers and collaborators. Under such a way of thinking, education embraces the commitment to search for means to provide intentionality and direction to the educational project aiming at the development of highly able/gifted children, not centered on their specific talent itself, but on the basic personality dimensions considered by the humanistic thought, namely: the *self* (such as in self-concept), inter-relationships with *others* (concept of others) and building acceptable relationships with the *world* (world concept and vision) (Guenther & Combs, 1980; Guenther, 1997).

Regarding the concept of *self*, besides the studies focusing on motivation and task commitment, we currently find growing attention to one aspect which Sidney Moon calls *Personal Talent* (Moon, 2001; 2003), conceptualized as "a *developed expertise in self understanding, decision making and self regulation*" (Moon, 2003, p. 11). Another dimension is added by the research on moral values, ethics and character building, showing that they can and should be cultivated and developed through educational practice (Tirri, 2003). This line of thought is expressed in CEDET conception, not only in philosophy and general principles but also in the pedagogical plan.

Together and harmonious living with each other, as a part of our theoretical basis, are dimensions usually contemplated in Gifted Education by way of *socialization* or *social development* (Pyryt, 2003; Rachmen and Zorman, 2003), or in studies about leadership and social competence. The third basis for CEDET plan stands mostly on working with scientific content and knowledge cultivated within the various fields of study, as shown in many programs carried on with highly able/gifted students. Working on the ground of such a theoretical frame CEDET pedagogical organization encompasses three broad enrichment areas:

1. Communication, Social Organization and Humanities: where children can find enrichment through activities related to social life and human relationships, including groups and associations, languages, media communication, and ways of dealing with sharing, interacting and living together on all levels of social organization.

2. Research, science and technology: this area opens doors to the world of scientific knowledge, building relationships between men and their perceived environment and getting acquainted with ways of approaching and understanding the world around us in an organized and rational manner.

3. Creativity, personal expressions and skills: to explore one's own self, a set of experiences lead to foster and explore the personal sphere of emotions and feelings, appreciation of beauty, understanding and cultivating one's own body and personal standing within the pursuit of common goals and purposes, such as in sports, recreation or performing arts.

Working dynamics

The Center for Potential and Talent Development – CEDET, is a program set out to provide support and complement the educational process for gifted and talented children attending different schools in the community, from elementary to High School levels (Guenther, 1995; 1999; 2000). It was installed

in 1993 in Lavras, a middle-size town with 100 thousand inhabitants, located in the interior of Minas Gerais State. The Center works in cooperation with public and private schools and the community, in an action network coordinated by the Parent and Friends Association for Supporting Talent – ASPAT.

Its main operational feature consists in establishing a multidisciplinary team of “facilitators” formed by professional educators recruited from different areas of interest, to work according to a plan of continuing guidance and study in the area of Gifted Education. This group is in charge of developing the educational process, forming such a net of influence that the school, the family and the community are called upon in different moments, to assure children and adolescents will receive the individual help and assistance they need in order to develop their own potential and talents.

State School System is now supporting the Center teachers and logistic structure, which were initially provided solely by the municipal government. Private schools help making available their facilities and equipments and volunteer work. Community involvement and participation, including the Federal University of Lavras, is called upon according to the needs detected through the Individual Plan worked out with the children every semester.

This somewhat complex network is integrated and regulated under ASPAT supervision. The community is urged to take co-responsibility for the program, not only helping with material resources but also undertaking the teaching of specific content subjects in the **Interest Groups, Individual Projects and Independent Studies**. This way, the community provides the necessary volunteers to develop the work. Once a child or group of children with a specific interest in a subject or area of studies is located, we go to the community for the person who best knows that subject and is willing to work with our children in the Center. Thus, the presence of volunteers in CEDET program is not a saving policy but a vital contingency to the quality of the pedagogical project. Each semester, we regularly have about 60 or 70 volunteer instructors at CEDET, developing activities with our 450 to 500 enrolled students. Another supporting

basis to the educational project is built with the help of the families also assisted by the Association.

The daily work at the Center is integrated with the regular schoolwork, since children go to school part of the day, either morning or afternoon, and come to CEDET when they are not at school. This type of organization is appropriate for Brazil, since schools work with two different groups of students, one in the morning and other in the afternoon.

The load of work for the children, about 10 hours a week, is decided on Individual Plan basis that is worked out with each student, at the beginning of the school semester. Such a planning contemplates differences in learning style and rhythm, specific interests and other needs assessed during the guidance sessions.

The identification process (Guenther, Barroso, Bezerra & Veiga, 1998) basically relies on direct observation conducted in stages, as follows:

1. The classroom teachers in all schools fill up a 26-item data sheet encompassing several ways of expressing intelligence, creativity, and other areas of potentiality, from Kindergarten to the 4th grade, at the end of the school year. The purpose of these data is to place each child in relation to their classmates, concerning characteristics signaling higher ability.

2. During the whole year, the Center personnel develops continuous observation in different situations and types of activities, allowing a closer comparison of the child's ability within more demanding group settings, through what we call "assisted observation".

3. A new annual data collection by the classroom teachers who worked with the children during that school year is carried out, usually with a different teacher and a new comparing group of students. Each year the process adds new data to the previous year observation and places new names to start the following year identification process.

When at least two of the three set of observers agree that the child does show signs of high ability, he/she is enrolled at CEDET. From 5th grade on, when

signs of higher ability are observed in a child that is still not attending the Center, the School Teacher Council appoints the child to CEDET in a joint decision. Once identified and enrolled, the student stays in CEDET through High School.

The educational assistance consists in developing the Individual Work Plan, that may comprise administrative procedures, such as acceleration, plus an enrichment plan for each child according to his/hers characteristics, inclination, needs, learning style and pace of production. In configuring such a plan some basic principles have to be followed, such as cultivating ethics and moral values; other procedures are situational, such as finding answers to problems raised in each activity. As a general rule, we do not offer a given set of subjects or activities to guide the student's choice, because we believe in strengthening the **internal locus of control**.

As described above, each area organizes its activities in **Interest Groups**, which are formed when at least 5 students show common interest or curiosity around a subject. Each group works with up to 15 students having certain compatibility in interests and in general development. A recruited volunteer then directs the group. When there are more than 16 students, more groups are formed. However, when only 4 children or less are inclined to a subject or a different kind of activity, we prefer to develop a **Project**. In order to start a Project, the student is required to have certain maturity and independence to work individually. Volunteers who wish to share their own expertise and interests with one or two highly able/gifted children at the CEDET also guide projects. Novelty and wide multidimensional subjects are approached during the **General Encounters**, which are meant to be moments of intense stimulation and opportunity for making choices among given possibilities. Each encounter gathers about 100 children, all different from each other, except for one common trait, usually school grade.

The whole educational process developed by CEDET including planning and observations, evaluation, changes, as well as activities and accomplished goals are registered in a set of documents and data sheets, on different levels:

1. On the school level, by the observation data sheet and lists of students attending the Center each year;
2. On the student level, through a cumulative record and the Individual Work Plans;
3. At the Center level, through attendance records for the interest groups and other activities, reports of shows and art work exhibitions, portfolios and other manifestations of students' production.

During its existence, CEDET has been submitted to three moments of general institutional evaluation, two of them originating publications (Guenther, 1996; 2002).

The interaction network coordinated by facilitators, teachers and volunteer instructors is integrated in such a way to ensure more than one reference person's influence upon the children, either in the school, in the work groups and projects or within the enrichment areas. In turn, facilitators are responsible for assisting and helping the volunteer instructors recruited for their area of studies. Normally, each facilitator is responsible for working with up to 80 children enrolled in two or more schools.

ASPAT and CEDET relationships with the public school system and private organizations are established by means of mutual cooperation agreements. Through such agreements the public systems provide the group of teachers to make up the team of facilitators and sometimes provide other personnel plus part of the necessary materials. Private institutions support the activities, allowing use of their facilities and volunteers.

During these eleven years of work, ASPAT/CEDET have accumulated some knowledge made available to people in several forms of publication, besides courses, national and regional events. Most of these initiatives are undertaken as means of improving the in-service staff. On this line of action, we have held five

biannual National Encounters and taken part in other Brazilian and foreign events. We also have signed cooperation agreements with similar associations in Brazil and Portugal, through which opportunities to share experiences are created, by exchanging studies, publications and visiting groups.

The staff guidance and continuous training is conducted by ASPAT Technical Director, who had a leading role in founding CEDET, developing her methodology, and working there as a volunteer since the beginning. The 4-hour-a-week study sessions are built into the staff workload during all year. At these sessions, individual case studies are discussed and decisions are made regarding current activities, volunteers', schools' and families' guidance, as well as presentation and discussion of publications and research projects being carried out in the Gifted Education around the world. In 2001, a Teachers Training Course was open at the Federal University of Lavras in partnership with ASPAT/CEDET, aiming at preparing professionals for Gifted Education. This course provides a "Specialist" title at graduate level, below Master's degree. It is developed in a regimen of partial class attendance completed by home study, attracting teachers from all over Brazil.

Regarding physical facilities, the Center is housed in a residential building with 4 activity rooms fitted for working groups, a small conference room, and a garden area of about 1000 sq. m. These facilities are quite sufficient for the program due to the fact that we do not have large numbers of children coming at the same time to the same space. Large meetings and assemblies are held in auditoriums in the community; counseling sessions with children, and sometimes parents, are held in the schools; the interest groups do not meet at the Center always, since most of the undertaken subjects of study demand a certain type of environment in the community, usually at the same place where volunteer instructors develop their professional activities.

This type of community participation interwoven into our own methodology is certainly CEDET most powerful feature since it assures diversity

and variety of themes, study subjects and activities, which give a level of quality to the program that otherwise, would be impossible to be achieved.

CEDET educational program finishes when High School is concluded. However, many students, still quite young and finding themselves out of school, seem to feel need to continue being close to the Center. These youngsters are absorbed by the *Young ASPAT* group. In this group there is not a regular enrichment program, but they plan and carry on their own course of action, assisted by a counselor assigned by ASPAT. Such activities have included festivities and celebrations, excursions, volunteer work in the Center and the Community and whatever they decide to undertake. This is a recent initiative started and going on only in the last two years.

Some unique features

CEDET educational planning aims not only at developing the abilities and talent shown by the children and adolescents, but also at promoting personal growth and building a healthy personality by: a) developing a positive and realistic self-concept; b) cultivating sensibility, acknowledgement and respect for others; c) building a frame of reference that allows for a rich, ample and well informed idea of the world.

One of its most cherished dimensions includes providing highly able/gifted children with interaction opportunities to experience living and working with each other, favoring acknowledgement of a peer group, which is more extensive and amplified than that the regular school can supply. In order to accomplish this, children stay in the regular school with their age peers and, at the same time, work at CEDET in another period of the day, with other groups of students more similar to themselves, including children coming from different schools and neighborhoods. In developing the activities that they choose and plan, they find opportunities to interact with different adults, in different situations: their counselors and other facilitators at the Center; the volunteers who guide content activities and studies; other persons at the Center.

One of the purposes listed at ASPAT bylaws and CEDET internal rules is reaching children who have talent associated to impairment or deficiencies. Although such cases are seldom detected, we have worked with a few disabled youngsters who show outstanding ability. We have worked with a deaf boy with a noticeable ability in drawing and another one with language blocking (false aphasia), who currently has recovered his speech ability. These children mix well in the group without constituting a situation of exceptionality. Presently, we have a child who attends a special school for retarded and comes to CEDET to work in the advanced drawing group.

OBJETIVO PROGRAM FOR FOSTERING TALENT³ – POIT
A private initiative

Objetivo Program for Fostering Talent – POIT, is a cooperation program between Objetivo School and Paulista University (UNIP), in São Paulo, the larger city in Brazil and the third larger city in the world, with 10 million inhabitants (Cupertino, 2000b). Both the school and the university are part of Objetivo Educational Center, an educational conglomerate disseminated within the whole country, having about 345 thousand enrolled students, from infant to postgraduate education. Objetivo School has over 500 units in all Brazilian states, and UNIP is the Brazilian largest university, with approximately 90,000 students in three different states.

Services for talented students started in the beginning of 1972, when students outstanding as to academic competence and intellectual potential were noted. It intends to serve highly able/gifted elementary and secondary students. After a series of initiatives to satisfy the needs of these students, POIT structure was consolidated in 1986, including several service modalities in several fields.

³ Programa Objetivo de Incentivo ao Talento – POIT. <http://www.objetivo.br>

We will herein analyze the implementation and functioning conditions, and comment on their main characteristics. Rather than intending to generalize this experience, we must reflect on the different ways of serving in different situations, beginning by the explanation of the background from which we can understand the creation of this particular program addressed to serve students who have characteristics different from their peers'.

Objetivo Program for Fostering Talent is one of the few Brazilian initiatives caring about highly able/gifted people, and the only one developed within a private institution, resulting in some specificities which should be discussed.

As a private institution, the school has autonomy to state its routines and propose activities, since meeting the expectations of its customers, in a certain way. At the same time, this need creates obstacles, since changes in the school public image are something to be avoided. Thus, we work within a narrow range, dealing with the wish of creating proper spaces for the development of diversified talents and the restraints caused by the institution specificities.

Predominantly, our students come from middle-class and low middle-class families who seek their attendance to university courses and expect school will provide an education mainly oriented to their children's good performance in university admittance examinations. As a result, the school offers traditional and standardized curricula. The way the school is physically organized, its routine, learning contents and materials used standardize rhythms and information, leaving poor divergence opportunities.

On the other hand, it has a specific profile according to which it is important to get the students acquainted with state-of-the-art technological resources, which are daily used in regular curriculum matters, since an early age. And it is insistently concerned about those students showing differentiated potentials for a long time.

As a counterpart to the lack of curricular flexibility, which parents understand as a safe factor, the alternative found was the creation of a large range of extra-curricular activities to meet each student's singularity. These

activities are so many and so incorporated to the school routine that students who take part of them do not feel segregated or discriminated. On the contrary, they feel integrated, as their involvement in a variety of activities allow them to attend school for periods longer than the mandatory time. Objetivo Program for Fostering Talent – POIT is one of these activities, and it is included within them in a quite particular way if compared to other gifted education programs.

An overall view of talent development in Colégio Objetivo

Starting in the seventies, our gifted education program followed the special-class segregating model, which was considered as the most reliable to deal with differentiated individuals at that time. This model proved to be unsuccessful as its participants were socially insulated from the remaining students. This proposal differentiated Objetivo School from other schools, where nurturing different people was only oriented to underachievers, and still prevails.

During the time while POIT current format was generated, Brazilian knowledge on highly able/gifted people developed, under the leadership of few isolated researchers (Rosemberg, 1973; Barros Santos, 1978; Novaes, 1979). That literature focused the quite important understanding of these individual's personal characteristics, as well as the environments, which will be favorable for their development, but it did not highlight concrete ways of meeting specific educational situations.

The next step taken was to replace the special classes for highly able/gifted students, that weren't working, by extra-curricular activities. In order the students could study in depth the topics they were more interested in, an **Advanced Programming** was created, and is still fully working until now. This modality, which is coordinated and offered by the different matter teachers, is not part of the POIT, officially, although complementing it. Under it, students showing specific talent, interest and motivation are prepared for Math and Physics Olympiads, for example, take part of Writing workshops or are tutored to develop in-depth studies on Human Sciences.

The school also offers opportunities to develop artistic talent, by means of the **Art and Culture Festival**, for which the students are prepared by in-house or external teachers; if there is not an in-house teacher specialized in the student's interest area, external teachers are hired for that specific project. These activities are offered to everybody; there is no selection process and students can take part of them simply because they are motivated to do so. However, activity depth and/or requirements will depend on the talent and performance of students, who are closely followed-up by the teacher.

Therefore, what remains to be done specifically by Objetivo Program for Fostering Talent, is defined by its partnership with the Psychology course of Universidade Paulista. POIT shall care for affective and relational aspects of highly able/gifted students, as well as creativity and leadership development, by providing a challenging and inviting environment, respecting children and youngsters' own rhythms, where they could live together and share experiences with people like them.

The model inspiring this service alternative developed by Objetivo Program for Fostering Talent was the Young Person's Institute for the Promotion of Arts and Sciences, leaded by Dr. Erika Landau, who helped to implement the program current format and supervised it for a long time. The supervision of Dr. Landau, a psychologist herself, was a natural consequence to the partnership between the school and the UNIP Psychology course. Although being a quite modest version of Dr. Landau's Institute, POIT orientation to psychological aspects of highly able/gifted students was based upon some of her ideas: the simultaneous need of emotional support and challenge to suitable develop giftedness; the assumption of an education towards future; the importance of developing interdisciplinary thinking; the possibility of working on problems from science and art points of view at the same time (Landau, 1987, 2002).

POIT fronts

Services to Objetivo School

1) **Identification of talented students:** identification is based upon quantitative data, such as those obtained from tests, where they are necessary, and qualitative data, from students' direct observation, teacher's, unit coordinator's and family's appointments. The weight of these factors are changing as studies on assessment methods are improved. Factors such as creativity or motivation, and/or high academic performance and artistic talent are considered (Cupertino & Sabatella, 1998). That is, many times we work with the students also involved in the other extra-curricular activities, but in a different way.

Student's identification, considered as one of the sensitive points of the process, does not end upon the selection itself, and includes guidance to their families and school professionals. It is permanently improved during the time children take part of the extra-curricular activities, where it is possible to observe and develop talents.

2) **Extra-curricular courses:** POIT extra-curricular program develops according to assumptions which differentiate it from typical gifted education programs, as it privileges students' affective aspects and their relationships, even in learning activities to use advanced technological tools. Freeman (1992, 1995) states that the program design depends closely on talent and higher performance conception, and that there are numberless giftedness definitions supporting services. In this sense, POIT orientation is based upon a giftedness conception defining that, rather than geniuses distant from the real world, we intend to create personal development conditions for current human beings having specific abilities. This means that we have to closely follow the students as to their specific needs, in order they could establish their own development level, according to their own criteria.

Psychological work and courses such as Robotics or Graphic Computing are integrated by means of teams having different structures depending on the activity being planned. In addition to psychologists and educators coordinating them, teams include Physics, Computing, Biology, Fine Arts, Drama and Writing teachers, as applicable. Psychology students who are specializing in in-depth studies on creativity and leadership, intending to work with this differentiated population in the future, also take part.

The activities are planned according to a variety of thematic axis, whose definition and development depends on several subject matters, and at least one teacher and one psychologist monitor classes. Most of the topics annually offered also include, in the same proposal, the use of advanced technological tools, which is the school trademark, creativity development techniques, and also permanent emotional support. The first one helps to create the challenging condition, the problems to be solved and provides the tools for such solutions. The remaining ones are backgrounded in students' personal development, the balance between ability and wish, under a predominantly psychological focus. Both daily and imaginary situations are approached, and software and hardware use is taught, while social responsibility and leadership for an ethically, environmentally and socially committed use of these resources is discussed. Because they focus personal development including a program linked to the surrounding reality, extra-curricular activities allow following-up individual interests and potentials of the students, teaching them to learn and improve their thinking and decision-making capacity.

While those "universal" subject matters are taught in regular classes and deepened in the Advanced Programming, within POIT, we emphasize conviviality and respect for differences and singularity, as well as the capacity to compose with each other, once the contemporary individuals are required to design their own cutouts from a complex reality (Lévy, 1995; Attali, 1996). From the relationship point of view, the activities allow greater interpersonal exchange and work relationships better, both with their peers in the special course itself or with

those in the regular classroom the students attend, allowing better integration. Caring about these issues, POIT is a kind of program whose activities aim at avoiding some of the occasional problems experienced by highly able/gifted children before they occur (Hickson, 1992).

The activities are organized in order to offer a quite varied range of options, so as children could experience possibilities, identifying themselves with those corresponding to their own wishes and abilities.

Perhaps an example can clear up the functioning of these activities. One of the courses is called "Fiction Worlds", a generic name, which may lead both to reconstructing traditional tales and fables or science fiction projects. The initial and permanent work is discussing with children the ideas of reality and fiction, real life experiences and the value of imagination. The worlds they will work with shall be jointly decided between students and teachers, and, thereafter, stories are conceived. The challenge of bringing these stories to life is then installed; this may happen in a drama representation, in the best Shakespearian style, or in the construction of futuristic robots, houses or artifacts. In any case, the professional team is in charge of advising children in order they could realize their project.

The program is based upon the pillars "what I do know", "what I do like" and "what I do want", trying to avoid some of the usual tensions highly able/gifted people experiment, resulting from the environment or their own pressures, to keep a permanent superior performance, which cause an emotionally stressing condition (Hannel, 1991). Finding out "what I do know" means appropriating our abilities, performing those things we are capable to do. But it also means identifying inabilities, weaknesses and limitations without feeling inadequate. Identifying "what I do like" translates into the possibility of making choices within all we know, identifying ourselves with some areas, devoting more energy to them, but also spending time in leisure and entertainment. "What I do want" is the result of the interaction between both the

above aspects, assertively targeting the goals to be pursued towards accomplishment.

3) **Counseling to school families and staff:** counseling is offered whenever the child is identified and included in the extracurricular program and always the family, POIT staff or any professional from the school need it. Also, at the end of the year, workshops are offered, where parents and children work together in activities similar to those that have been offered, in order they could get acquainted with children activities.

Services at UNIP Applied Psychology Centers

The necessary extension of the same kind of service to the community guides the other field where POIT is developed. Highly able/gifted children, adolescents and adults' psychological diagnosis, orientation to services, family and school counseling are offered at the Applied Psychology Centers of UNIP. These services targeting São Paulo city and surrounding population, represent a charge-free interventive model of assessment based on a phenomenological approach (Ancona-Lopez et al, 1995).

The main derivations of POIT services are the projects developed by Psychology students, extending those services offered to the school students to other population segments, such as at-risk children and adolescents leaving in institutions or host-homes, for example, or the study of effects of social programs involving talent identification and development, such as musical education social programs, among others.

This possibility is a benefic consequence of the attitudes adopted and transmitted to the students by POIT professionals. On one hand, the program is an exclusivity of this school in the city, differentiating it from the other schools and attracting students for that reason. Since POIT beginnings, in 1986, the highly able/gifted children coming to the school because of the program raised the rate of talented students from 5 to 20% the total enrolled students. On the

other hand, the discussion developed within it on issues such as social responsibility, leadership and the “ideal worlds” of which we allow ourselves to dream has led the team to the wish of extending such achievements and the technology developed to other population segments still not served. This work has started recently, but it has increasingly seduced the people involved and seems to become irreversible (Cupertino, 2000a, 2001).

Training of specialized professionals, knowledge production and transmission and the exchange with other institutions also result from the cooperation between the school and the university, as well as activities intending to aware society concerning the topic, such as media advising to journalistic articles or documentaries and conferences in institutions (educational or not) or to the community.

Improving the institutional conditions, favoring the exchange in several instances, the work develops based upon the premise that gifted specialized education shall be systematic. Students’ and professionals’ participation in isolated programs is not enough: a consistent action supposes an articulated and consistent context, the insertion in a larger multidimensional project. In this sense, multi-level actions allow permanent practice questioning, as to its fundamentals and possible innovations, in renewing cycles where new points of view become possible in different situations where the work develops.

It was only due to the long-lasting partnership between the school and the university that the program remains in place and shows its reliability, which comes from a series of linked activities developed by several people from both institutions and mutually supported. This articulated and fully running network creates links transcending the people involved, and making the process hard to revert.

Gifted Education under Brazilian Southern winds

Although gifted educational services are still quite incipient in Rio Grande do Sul state, promising initiatives have becoming increasingly stronger in recent years.

The history of gifted education within the Brazilian southernmost state, started in 1972, upon the approval of the Federal Educational Guidelines (1971), which included highly able/gifted students as one of the Special Education target populations. At that time, educational state plans began to recognize highly able/gifted students' under-representation in Public Educational Policies, and the lack of services, foreseeing actions on their behalf among their provisions, most frequently unaccomplished.

A brief description of the services offered for the highly able/gifted in the state will be provided below, but discussion will focus the work developed by **AGAAHSD**⁴ (Association to Support High Abilities/Giftedness of Rio Grande do Sul State), a non-governmental organization advocating for highly able/gifted people.

Four different institutions – three public and one private - are presently offering some kind of services to the highly able/gifted children and/or their families. Public services include:

FADERS (Foundation for Articulating Public Policies for Disabled and Highly Able Persons of Rio Grande do Sul State)⁵: a foundation in charge of coordinating public policies for disabled and highly able/gifted people, which is subordinated to the State Department of Education. FADERS keeps a tiny department – NAPPAH (Office for Highly Able Persons)⁶ - as the sole responsible for the high abilities/giftedness area. Gifted screening and counseling, human

⁴ Associação Gaúcha de Apoio às Altas Habilidades/Superdotação. <http://www.agaahsd.org.br>

⁵ Fundação de Articulação e Desenvolvimento de Políticas Públicas para Pessoas Portadoras de Deficiência e de Altas Habilidades no Estado do Rio Grande do Sul.

⁶ Núcleo de Atendimento às Pessoas Portadoras de Altas Habilidades.

resources training and research on highly able/gifted people are the three main action lines of this state reference center. NAPPAH main objectives for the 2003-2006 period include the proposal of the implementation of a public educational policy for highly able/gifted students, demanded by AGAAHSD to the State Department of Education; the promotion of on-going and systematic actions in different areas and complementary services aiming at identifying, grouping, school-advising and training, family counseling and community awareness, among others.

The Education Center of the Federal University of Santa Maria: The second public service is the research project developed by the Special Education Course of the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), supported by a national program of undergraduate scholarship, and the National Board of Scientific and Technologic Development, which aims at promoting discussions on High Abilities/Giftedness/Talent within the town where the university is based and adjacent region as to the relevance of the theme and need of greater involvement of policy-makers in proposing projects intending to develop all kinds of human potential. The project started in July 1999 is currently concluding the psychological assessment of 3rd and 4th graders to start services through enrichment groups.

The Military schools of Porto Alegre and Santa Maria towns offer the third public service for the highly able/gifted within Rio Grande do Sul State. Porto Alegre school project started in 1997, based upon Edward De Bono's thinking tools, until 2000, when it adopted a wider approach. The project, which combines workshops and individual and/or group project tutoring, was presently extended to the

school students attending from 8th grade through the three secondary school years.

AGAAHSD – Association to Support High Abilities/Giftedness of Rio Grande do Sul State. The fourth institution involved in services for the highly able/gifted is the only and pioneering organization in this area within the state, an NGO recognized and registered as a non-profit public utility organization by federal and state governments, being one of the strongest associations for the highly able/gifted within the country.

Principles and conceptual foundations

Some of the particular conceptions and the work developed for over 22 years will be shared hereinafter in order to help similar institutions or even be helped by others in this sometimes insane and heroic efforts to get highly able/gifted people needs and rights met. It is important to state some of the principles this NGO has as to highly able/gifted people and the services that must be provided to them, because gifted education isolated is not properly one of its goals.

As to high abilities/giftedness definition, AGAAHSD shares Renzulli's Three-Ring conception (1998), that is, existing or potential behaviors reflecting an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits - above average general and/or specific abilities, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity – which are applied to any potentially valuable area of human performance.

The NGO also assumes that education (and so special education where gifted education is included) is a social concern, which must be jointly provided by governmental bodies (educational, cultural, labor, social welfare, health, technological agencies, and so on), that should implement and settle integral policies, and the civil society as a whole,

which should claim and monitor these policies. Another couple of important principles is that, as reinforced by Renzulli (1999, p. 17) "*a consistent democratic philosophy of education for all students legitimizes differentiation for all students*", therefore, the improvement of general education will allow highly able/gifted students to be properly served; and that gifted education approaches could and should be extended to all students, as they might improve general education.

As to the kind of services to support highly able/gifted development, enrichment alternatives such as extracurricular activities, workshops, mentoring, tutoring, resource rooms and flexible curricula or compacting are considered as the most suitable within the state reality.

Maier (1993, p. 865) defines advocacy purpose is fourfold: "(1) *to correct mistaken assumptions about the nature of the subject; (2) to improve the conditions which nurture the subject; (3) to broaden the scientific knowledge base which informs identification procedures*", and "(4) *to deepen specialized instructional and curricular provisions*". As a non-governmental, non-profit organization, which has no political party or government commitments or links, AGAAHSD is able to claim governmental actions to meet highly able/gifted people needs, before different authorities, to cooperate in the formulation and implementation of these actions and policies, whenever considered applicable and correct, and to monitor their performance (or lack of it).

Functioning

Founded as the Brazilian Association for the Gifted – Rio Grande do Sul branch, in 1981, the institution has changed its name to Association to Support High Abilities/Giftedness of Rio Grande do Sul,

in early 2003, after the branches of the first institution became independent organizations.

It always included highly able/gifted people and their relatives, professionals from different areas and interested persons, since its inception, but not in management positions. However, as Guenther states, *"Educational Policy, particularly in Special Education to develop abilities and talents, is a situation demanding local, own and genuine thinking and knowledge that has to be developed by the people involved and leaving the situation themselves"* (2000, Insert, p. 6). Thus, from 1994 on, and during the last four management periods, highly able/gifted people and parents have exclusively formed the institutional board. The board membership is deeply and clearly aware of gifted people's needs and rights, of the lack of information and consequent misconceptions; the lack of publications and academic research; the lack of services, funds and sometimes of political will from governments, and they perform fierce and on-going efforts to advocate for the gifted. Professors, technicians and other professionals also take part of the NGO management, but they are appointed to the Technical and Fiscal Committees, which advice the managing board as to accounting, administrative and technical issues. Whenever projects, events or training courses have to be prepared, these committees are called to discuss and present proposal to implement them.

The association core activities are developed throughout four axes:

1) Counseling and advising are provided to highly able/gifted relatives, teachers or even highly able/gifted people themselves, who contact the institution and are guided on several inquiries, including the search of proper services. Research students, journalists, teachers and professors interested in highly able/giftedness are frequently advised on the subject, as well as educational authorities, including

state and local education departments. Monthly meetings, always including a conference or workshop on different issues related to giftedness, are open to the whole community. Invitations are sent to the associates, public and private institutions and press releases, whenever possible. In these meetings, Master's and Doctor's degree students present their academic theses and dissertations and professionals from different areas present their experiences. One of the topics recently discussed, for example, was Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD). As this syndrome diagnosis is currently running amok in Brazilian schools, mainly among elementary students, and because it has been often misconstrued as ADHD, the State Association for Hyperactivity was invited to one of these meetings. Discussions were conducted in order to clearly explain to the public the typical symptoms of ADHD, and characteristics of gifted people, as well as the importance of promoting careful and systematic observations carried out by psychologists (rather than neurologists) in order to avoid misdiagnoses.

2) Advocacy and Promotion of highly able/gifted people's rights include the participation in public audiences, meetings with government authorities, and pressure put on state and municipal educational departments and Councils to include highly able/gifted people's rights in public policies and services, participation in community forums, governmental and community committees and any other kind of governmental instances where highly able/gifted people's rights could be advocated. The organization has a chair in the Coordinating Committee of the Public Policy for Disabled and Gifted People in the state, together with another six disability areas, having a leading role in the conduction of this Policy.

During 2001, AGAAHSD has held several meetings with the State Education Department to demand the implementation of a Public

Educational Policy for highly able/gifted students. As a result, a course on Special Education, in the field of High Abilities was sponsored by the Educational Department and executed by the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul state, supported by AGAAHSD and FADERS. Professors from different universities, most of them with Doctor's and Master's degree, offered this 420-class/hour specialization course during 2002, to 50 representatives of the 30 state educational districts, AGAAHSD's members and FADERS' employees. The initiative was the second, since the 1981 first specialization course on High Abilities, then offered by the Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul and supported by AGAAHSD (at that time, under the former name). The requirement to approve the 2001 course was a project on high abilities the students would have to design and implement in their own districts and the commitment to continue working within the area during the next 5 years. After a new political party was led to the government AGAAHSD met the Education Department authorities again demanding the policy implementation started with the course to go on. A pilot project is currently being discussed with FADERS to start providing services to highly able/gifted students in public schools by the beginning of next school year.

Upon the approval of the National Educational Plan, which was designed to rule from 2001 through 2011, all Brazilian State Education departments would have to approve their own Educational Decennial Plans, too. Rio Grande do Sul State Education Department has organized a Permanent Forum to discuss its 2003-2013 Plan, holding meeting with the community to adjust the goals, objectives and guidelines stated by the National Educational Plan to the state reality. In the Special Education Chamber meetings, many actions were suggested and voted by AGAAHSD and NAPPAAH's representatives,

including the statement of specific educational guidelines for the gifted, within one year from the Plan approval.

Several members of AGAAHSD were founders of the recently created Brazilian Council for the Gifted, being part of its board and Technical Committee, also being represented in the Ibero-American Federation of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children.

3) Research and training: research activities include the effective performance of researches and encouragement.

One of the most important actions recently developed in this field was a survey carried out in the Metropolitan Region of Porto Alegre. As federal or state official surveys on giftedness are based only upon the data sent by school administrators to the Education Ministry or state departments, and because of the lack of information and misconceptions on giftedness, the number of highly able/gifted students on such surveys is almost inexistent. As Weschler (1998, p. 163) states, one of the most common answers when questioning on highly able/gifted students is, *"I have no gifted students in the classroom, my dear. Here there are only low-income students with low grades"*. This was one of the obstacles the institution faced when claiming for gifted education before government authorities, as numbers could not be assessed. Consequently, gifted education was considered as an elitist proposal, which would serve very few students.

So, the organization decided to invest the whole fund it awarded in 2001 from the state government to develop a survey to find out highly able/gifted students' prevailing rate in public and private elementary schools of the Metropolitan Region of Porto Alegre (state capital). Using broader giftedness and intelligence conceptions, such as Renzulli's Three-ring conception of giftedness (1979, 1986), and Gardner's multiple intelligences theory (1983, 2000), the survey became the first of its kind in Rio Grande do Sul, and its results

showed 7.78% the students have giftedness indicators. This means that out of the 3.5 million inhabitants of the Metropolitan Region of Porto Alegre at that moment, 272,300 people would have high ability indicators. As the results can be safely extrapolated to the whole state, the survey allows assuming that almost 800,000 people out of the over 10-million population of Rio Grande do Sul would have high ability indicators at that time. From them, 172,020 would be elementary and secondary school students deserving and, according with federal and state laws, entitled to receive gifted education.

As to research encouragement, in recent years the NGO has promoted the submittal of presentations in national and international events within the field, including the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children Conference, since 2000. The State Meeting Rethinking Intelligence, first held in 1996, is now a biennial event organized by the institution in 2000, 2002, whose fourth edition is scheduled to be held in July 2004. In 2003, AGAAHSD professionals and board members took part in six round-tables on different topics relating Education in The International Seminar Building Knowledge on Diversity, and offered six workshops in the 1st State Meeting on Special Education promoted by the Federal University of Santa Maria.

In this kind of events where AGAAHSD professionals take part as lecturers or teachers as volunteers, their participation is exchanged for inscriptions, which are then distributed to the associates who cannot afford the fees, according to the criteria approved by the general assembly. In the events organized by the institution, free inscriptions are also provided to those associates who cannot afford the fees and the supporting institutions also receive a number of free inscriptions to be distributed. Priority is given to those who cannot afford fees, especially for schoolteachers.

Training is the other activity developed under this axis. Members of the Technical Committee and Board have already offered several courses, workshops and subject matters to local education departments and state districts, schoolteachers, and university courses. From 1999 on, three training courses were developed in partnership with the Municipal Education Department of Porto Alegre. These training courses were offered to schoolteachers and special education school advisers.

4) Awareness promotion and information is the fourth axis. Under it, members of the Board and Technical Committee give lectures and conferences to public and private university, elementary and high schools or to the community in general trying to increase awareness on giftedness and related subjects. In 2002, over 2,000 people were directly reached through these activities. In 2003, conferences and lectures were offered to students of Education and Psychology courses of the catholic university (PUCRS), elementary schools of Porto Alegre, and municipal education departments of neighboring towns. Members of the Technical Committee who have been invited to develop training courses in Rio Grande do Sul and even other Brazilian states always refer to AGAAHSD and divulge its activities.

A small library including books, theses, dissertations, journals and magazines on high abilities/giftedness and related subjects purchased with associates' voluntary fees, congresses and seminars revenues and donations is also freely offered to the NGO associates and the community, being the only specialized library within the state and one of the few ones in the country. A Manual for Parents and Teachers on High Abilities and Giftedness was published in 2000 and 15,000 issues are regularly distributed within the state and the whole country during every activity AGAAHSD promotes or organizes.

A biennial project called "Jornadas CriARTEiras" has also been developed from 1997, including monthly workshops in different areas, which are offered by associates and volunteers to the community on Saturdays during a few months. This project is developed in partnership with schools and private institutions, which offer rooms and/or materials. AGAAHSD provides lecturers and workshop for teachers free of charge. The workshops on different artistic and scientific issues such as physics, chess, capoeira, dancing, sculpture, painting, drawing, role playing games, works with recycled materials, origami, writing, puppets, journalism, are offered by AGAAHSD associates or external volunteers, such as university professors or expert teachers, expert players or professionals working in those areas. About 25 participants previously enrolled by the partnering institutions have attended the workshops. In the same day and time, lectures on Giftedness have been offered to the community (students parents and relatives or interested people) and schoolteachers.

The association has a website with information on giftedness issues, legal and institutional information, events and the Manual for Parents and Teachers which may be freely downloaded with an e-mail address for contacts.

Therefore, although educational laws and plans seem to be theoretically quite ahead, shadow often falls between the idea and reality and, besides the great efforts of the state association supporting high abilities (AGAAHSD) in demanding appropriate services within the regular school, just few students are served in fact.

Finally, although reality is still quite below our expectations, the common efforts we are endeavoring in Rio Grande do Sul assure every single step we took will lead us further and further towards a quality gifted education and is irreversible.

Project to Serve Highly Able/Gifted Students⁷ – PAAAHSD

In Rio de Janeiro one of the projects serving highly able/gifted students is Project to Serve Highly Able/Gifted Students – PAAAHSD of the Education School of the Fluminense Federal University (FEUFF).

Background

The project has started in 2002, and its origins are directly related to several factors. The first one was the lack of educational services for students with high abilities/giftedness in Niterói town, Rio de Janeiro State, where FEUFF is based, due to the prejudices already mentioned regarding the recognition of this population, associated to exclusion and discrimination either in private or public schools. On the other hand researchers from FEUFF were offering, since 1992, a free-of-charge identification service to students with high abilities/giftedness and counseling their families and schools, in order to support university research. By 2001, nine students from 11 through 17 years old had already evidenced academic and non-academic high abilities, providing “evidence” of the existence of highly able/gifted youngsters.

More specifically, there was the interest of five Pedagogy undergraduates in developing studies on the field of Educational Computing applied to Special Education, focusing High Abilities/Giftedness, together with the existence of a Special Education Computing Lab at FEUFF.

At the same time, the results of a recent Doctor’s degree dissertation had shown that students who were considered highly able/gifted, identified upon their high academic performance in public schools in Rio de Janeiro, attending specialized resource rooms, did not manage to face school failure. They ended

⁷ Projeto de Atendimento a Alunos com Altas Habilidades/Superdotação – PAAAHSD. <http://www.paaahsd.hpg.ig.com.br/index.htm>

up conforming to the school performance standards considered minimum to succeed in passing to the next grade, believing that the difficulties they encountered were a result of their own intelligence (Delou, 2001). Something should be done to create an environment where their intelligence could be properly challenged, so they could trust it.

The belief that the development of a project with students evidencing high abilities/giftedness, inside FEUFF facilities, would contribute to the education of teachers, which may be qualified by pedagogic actions mediated with real students, while bringing attention to the possibility of creating specific conditions for the development of high ability/giftedness, was the background for the project. So PAAAHSD started, in early 2002, supported by the university Extension Board, upon the approval of an integrated learning/service/community project made explicit through the award of the first scholarship to an undergraduate of the Pedagogy course in Special Education, specifically working with students with high abilities/giftedness. It has been functioning for two years now, and its results are also disclosed through the Internet.

Objectives and theoretical basis

The project objectives are developing pedagogic actions propitiating Pedagogy undergraduates to work and learn about students who show high abilities/giftedness educational profiles, contributing with these undergraduates' education, nurturing the highly able/gifted students through pedagogical experiences, encouraging creative thinking in Educational Computing and producing knowledge in Special Education for highly able/gifted students, mediated by activities carried on in the FEUFF Special Education Computing Lab.

The decision to follow methodological paths of pedagogic work mediated by creativity was based upon Vigotski's (1929) words, "*Geniality, superior talent degree, expressed through high creativity, having an extraordinary historical meaning for society life*" and that "*if inheritance makes geniality possible, only the social environment realizes this potential, and creates the genius*" (Vigotski,

1929, in Delou & Bueno, 2001). This is the reason why creativity plays a prominent role in history and social development change, being emphasized and highlighted as an inestimable value for several researchers (Alencar, 2001; Novaes, 1999; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999).

As to the pedagogic methodology, creative experiences and the exchange of experiences in computing were carried out during the first year, ending with critical reflections on computing programs for persons with special educational needs. Educational Computing had a pedagogical mediation role, as the selected students had not only an interest but also a specific talent in this area.

The pedagogic program developed was based upon Robert Sternberg's theory, who considers intelligence as an "*adapting behavior addressed to certain goal*" (1987), understanding that the variety of human behaviors seems to be determined by enriched cultural and social rules. According to Sternberg (2000), "*to a large extent, creativity is a decision. Children as well as adults are creative, not by virtue of an innate ability, but by virtue of a set of decisions*" (p. 60). He states that ten decisions are necessary for people to be creative in life, and suggests pedagogical activities, which may be developed in order to mediate decision-making learning. The decisions are:

1. *Redefine Problems*: to see a problem differently in relation to most people.
2. *Analyze Your Own Ideas*: submitting one's own ideas to a critical analysis before concluding that they are the best ones.
3. *Sell Your Ideas*: selling one's own optimal ideas to common of expert audiences.
4. *Knowledge is a Double-Edged Sword*: knowing can be a barrier to creativity (Frensch & Sternberg, 1989, in Sternberg, 2000). Teachers and students are more competent working together than separately.
5. *Surmount Obstacles*: surmounting the obstacles created by the surprise caused by new ideas.

6. *Take Sensible Risks*: taking safe risks, because creation involves risking something.
7. *Willingness to Grow*: growing knowledge, widening research fields.
8. *Believe in Yourself*.
9. *Tolerance of Ambiguity*: tolerating one's own ideas ambiguity, while they become clearer.
10. *Find What You Love to Do and Do It*: finding out one's own passion in school or elsewhere, even when not fitting into the cultural or social establishment. (In Sternberg, 2000, 60-64)

Characteristics of the team

Project complexity was highlighted while organizing the meetings, as they should contribute to the undergraduates' education, creating rich academic opportunities to observe highly able/gifted students, and nurture them, avoiding these meeting to become stereotyped, unreal educational instances which may encourage lack of interest in the project and its abandonment.

The presence of Pedagogy undergraduates in the meetings led to a previous definition of their roles.

The extension scholarship-holding undergraduate should manage the meetings from planning through evaluation. She should supervise the programming and organize the classroom to develop the activities, also supervising the necessary data records, to be presented in the annual "Final Report of Activities" and in seminars at the University, congresses and meetings.

The graduating students were responsible for recording the different activities and the dialogs between the gifted students, alternately, in order all of them would experience this record modality. These records have supported the content analysis of the students' dialogues. Eventually, these graduating students would mediate the activities aiming at deepening their final graduating works, whenever necessary.

The selection of highly able/gifted students was based upon two criteria: being already identified by the PAAAHSD diagnosis service and being from 10 to 20 years old. A descriptive life-story interview was carried out with all students themselves or the persons taking care of them. Once precociousness, interest, academic performance, family backgrounds and development characteristics were identified, psychological testing was carried on using projective and intelligence tests. Six students with high abilities/giftedness from 12 to 16 years old were first selected. All of them were white boys living in three different towns within Rio de Janeiro state attending private schools: four elementary and two secondary. All of them were middle-class, having father and mother living together; only one of them has separated parents with new families. One student's father was unemployed and only the parents of one of them had no university education.

During the psychological assessment it was verified that all of them showed indicators of graphic intelligence, creativity and variations as to emotional aspects, ranging from adjustment to emotional disturbance traits. Only one of them had no significant verbal fluency while five always showed a percentile over 95 and one about 90. Out of the six selected students, five were accelerated during first grades, as they have learnt reading and writing under the age of five, being followed-up by the PAAAHSD responsible professor.

Academic above average performance was evident, although two of them were repeating students, both clearly school-unmotivated. Family background investigation showed reports of academic, creative, artistic and social-talented ancestors in all interviews. Student's development path reveals the need of deeper studies on this human area in order to disclose all the contradictions involved, which are opposed to the human development standardization efforts.

Other issues relating the selected students' singularity are being catalogued for future studies.

People at work

Learning of Sternberg's ten decisions was planned to be developed in two-hour meetings. Students were encouraged to think creatively, during the first hour, in hypothetic situations, logic-mathematic, linguistic and life daily situations based upon the examples suggested by Sternberg (2000) and using activities suggested by Virgolim, Fleith and Neves-Pereira (1999), who also believe funny exercises allow children to develop thinking flexibility and imagination. This option was grounded on the belief that, although within an environment displaced from real life, where students' schooling effectively occurs, we expect the school to promote opportunities to develop creative abilities, strategies and products, avoiding excessively emphasizing fact-memorization, dogmatism of ideas, conformism and passiveness (Alencar, 1991; Amabile, 1989; Delou, 2001; Fleith, 2001; Wechsler, 2001).

During the second hour, students were encouraged to exchange experiences in the computing field. We already knew that a 13-year-old boy had website designing competences, and he had developed his own website, and that there was another boy who had robotics competences. During the meetings, we noticed that most of the students already had advanced experiences and knowledge in computing, such as programming, hardware and network maintenance. It was expected that, during the weekly meetings, students would feel encouraged to exchange experiences, and this was systematically observed. Upon their own request, the analysis of software for persons with special educational needs was anticipated. They get in touch with Dosvox, a Brazilian application for blind people, being encouraged to use it and think about it. Thus, it was expected that students would develop feelings, ethic values and solidarity interests for their Special Education peers having visual disability and blindness. At this stage, the students were equally interested for the disabled they were helping and for the frequent use of Dosvox itself, due to the challenge of audio stimulation.

During 2002, two students dropped out the project, but two other were admitted, the group remaining with six students. These two new students were

boys, both from Niterói, one attending elementary and the other one a high school. Both of them were middle-class, from a private school, and their parents had university education.

Evaluation of the project

Project evaluation was performed as to the following criteria: frequency of all the students involved (undergraduate and those with a high abilities/giftedness educational profile), participation and effective contribution of everybody to develop the activities, analysis of the pre-existing competences at the first meetings, follow-up of the acquirement of new competencies in collective work and verification of changes compared to initial competencies.

The goals attained during the first year were:

- 1) Research and pedagogic practice follow-up with the scholarship-holder;
- 2) Guidance follow-up of the final work to five Pedagogy graduating students of Universidade Federal Fluminense; three of them have presented their final work, two in the field of high abilities/giftedness and one in the field of educational computing;
- 3) Follow-up of a Design undergraduate at the Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro who created and developed a game called DESAFIARTE, together with the project students;
- 4) Services to eight students between the ages of 12 and 17 years old having a high abilities/gifted educational profile;
- 5) Pedagogic experiences encouraging creative thinking;
- 6) Development of two portfolios, hard copies and virtual, by the students who have developed projects on History and Latin.

A goal that was not foreseen was the need, created by the research to survey the students' academic interests, to search of new project partners. Five teachers joined the project to guide students' individual projects on History,

Latin, Anthropology, Visual Communication and Social University Admittance Examination.

By the end of 2002, two activities called the attention and brought visibility to Project to Serve Highly Able/Gifted Students – PAAAHSD. The first was an academic activity exhibiting all the scientific works produced, which increased community diagnosis and counseling demands, and the second one was an in-house seminar open to the community, PAAAHSD students and their parents in order to discuss the issues related to the new educational laws, which foresee the inclusion of all students having special educational needs in regular schools. After this seminar, the relationship between the university and the municipal education system became closer, and it was stated that, in 2003, an agreement will be signed, as well as a partnership that would not only start public services to highly able/gifted students but would also qualify the educational system teachers to serve these students in resource rooms and regular classrooms.

Considering the wide pedagogic nature of the Program and the political conquests attained in 2002, a proposal to continue PAAAHSD in 2003 was submitted to and approved by the Extension Board. The results of the works developed during this year are being processed and intended to be disclosed in 2004.

Conclusion

The four initiatives presented above show that, to build a bridge between cumulative knowledge and practice, it is necessary to analyze, deconstruct and adapt the frameworks supporting the actions. This necessity for a review arises because the scientific community is no longer only committed to the ideals that underpinned the classic

scientific model, grounded in rational logic and in the search for a single truth. On the contrary, there is an increasing awareness of and involvement with the trend towards global unification, no longer driven by uniformity but by the goal of ethical respect for singularity and cultural diversity.

To link the traditional scientific discourse, which addresses generalization, to practice, it is important to build contextualized understanding, in order to study particular characteristics of human groups, and social and physical environments in particular contexts. The purpose is to build up knowledge of a world, not with a single meaning for everyone but with many meanings (Vattimo, 1991) that can be understood from the standpoint of a micropolitical approach (Guattari, 1989; 1992).

Practice becomes a locus for research and a source of contextualized knowledge, forcibly leading to a transition whereby the objectives of the academic knowledge production should, to a certain extent, reassure its original function of discovery and consolidation of original perspectives, a status gradually lost owing to the increasing demands of specialization, and the establishment of routines designed more for reproduction than production of knowledge (Demo, 1994), observed, for example, in Teacher Training, as mentioned before.

Special programs for talented people in Brazil, because of their "eccentricity" in a country with all the issues related to special education for highly able/gifted children, have shown an inestimable value in society awareness to the need of also nurturing this kind of difference. According to their organization, they can inspire individuals' school inclusion. Upon the full institution of the reforms related to the inclusion of differences, they might show alternatives to be developed using differentiated educational resources.

What we hope is that the examples presented can disclose to other educators, living in the same conditions or not, some alternatives for providing services for the highly able/gifted in their own contexts and specific situations.

REFERENCES

- ALENCAR, E. M. L. S. (1986) *Psicologia e educação do superdotado* [Psychology and Education of the gifted]. Sao Paulo: EPU.
- _____ (1991) *Como desenvolver o potencial criador* [How to develop creative potential]. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- _____. (2001) *Criatividade e educação de superdotados* [Creativity and Gifted Education]. Petrópolis: Vozes,
- AMABILE, T.A. (1989) *Growing up creative*. Buffalo, NY: The Creative Education Foundation Press.
- ANCONA-LOPEZ et alli. (1995) *Psicodiagnóstico: processo de intervenção* [Psychological Assessment: an intervention process]. São Paulo, Cortez.
- ANTIPOFF, H. (1992) *Educação do Bem-Dotado* [Gifted Education]. Coletânea das obras escritas por Helena Antipoff, Vol V, CDPHA, Belo Horizonte, MG.
- ASPAT (2002) *Manual do Participante*. V Encontro Nacional, Lavras- M. G.
- ATTALI, J. (1996) *Chemins de sagesse*. Paris, Fayard.
- COMBS, A.; RICHARDS, A.; RICHARDS, F. (1976) *Perceptual Psychology – A Humanistic Approach to the Study of Persons*, N.Y. Harper and Roe.
- Conselho Nacional de Educação [Federal Council of Education] – (2001) *Diretrizes para a Educação Especial* [Directions to Special Educational] MEC/CNE - Brasília, DF.
- CUPERTINO, C. M. B. (1998) *Educação dos diferentes no Brasil: o caso da superdotação* [Educating the “different” in Brazil: the high ability case].

Anais do 1º. Congresso Internacional de Educação da Alta Inteligência, Mendoza, Argentina, p. 98-107.

_____. (2000a) The limits of traditional evaluation and the identification of gifted children in a Brazilian *favela*. In *Gifted Education International*, v. 15, n. 1, p. 71 a 79.

_____. (2000b) Practicas educativas: la universidad y la escuela cooperan para ayudar a los potenciales diferenciados. Ideación, número especial, ed. Yolanda Benito, p. 135-146.

_____. (2001) Identificação de potenciais diferenciados: encontros e desencontros de uma equipe de pesquisa em uma comunidade de periferia de São Paulo [Identification of differentiated potentials in an underprivileged community in the boundaries of Sao Paulo]. *Boletim da Associação Portuguesa para Estudos da Inteligência, da Criatividade e do Talento APEPICTa*, pp. 30 a 39.

_____. Oficinas de Criatividade em formação [Creativity workshops in training programs]. Paper presented in the 3rd. Seminar UNIP-Objetivo in Creativity. Sao Paulo, 2003. (Unpublished paper)

CUPERTINO, C.; FORGHIEIRI, M.; BERNARDO, P. P. O uso de recursos expressivos e formação profissional [The use of artistic activities in professional training]. 5º Congresso Nacional de Arte-Educação na Escola para todos. Brasília, novembro de 2000, p.151.

CUPERTINO, C. & SABATELLA, M.L. Identificação de talentos: fundamentos e limites [Identification of talent: foundations and limits]. Anais do Congresso Internacional sobre Superdotação, 3º. Congresso Iberoamericano sobre superdotação, 12º. Seminário Nacional da Associação Brasileira para Superdotados. Brasília, agosto de 1998, p.89.

DELOU, CRISTINA M. C. (2001) *Sucesso e fracasso escolar de alunos superdotados: um estudo sobre a trajetória escolar de alunos que*

receberam atendimento em salas de recursos de escolas da Rede Pública de Ensino [Gifted students' success and failure: a study about students enrolled in public school resource rooms]. Dissertação – Doutorado em Educação, PUC, São Paulo.

DELOU, C. M. C. & BUENO, J. G. S. (2001) O que Vigotski pensava sobre genialidade [Vigotski's thoughts about genius]. *Revista da Faculdade de Educação PUC – Campinas*. Campinas, 11, 97-99.

FLEITH, D. S. Criatividade: Novos conceitos e idéias, aplicabilidade à educação [Creativity: new concepts and ideas applied to Education]. *Cadernos de Educação Especial*. Santa Maria: Ed UFSM, 2001. 17, 55-61.

FREEMAN, J. (2003) Out of school activities for the gifted and talented around the world, in Monks, F. and Wagner, H. *Development of Human Potential: Investment into our Future*. ECHA: K. H. Bock, p. 209-215

_____. (2002) *Out of school educational provision for the gifted and talented around the world*. Report for the Department for Education and Skills. UK government (Unpublished manuscript).

_____. (1995) Review of current thinking on the development of talent. In Freeman, Span & Wagner *Actualizing Talent*. London, Cassel.

_____. (1992) *Quality basic education: the development of competence*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

FREEMAN, J. e GUENTHER, Z. (2000) *Educando os Mais Capazes- Idéias e Ações Comprovadas* [Educating the highly able – proved ideas and actions], EPU – Editora Pedagógica e Universitária, São Paulo, SP.

GALLAGHER, J. (1997) *Least Restrictive Environment and Gifted Education*. Peabody Journal of Education, 72 (3 e 4), pag.153-165

GALLAGHER, J. E GALLAGHER, S. (1994) *Teaching the Gifted Child*. Allyn and Bacon, Boston.

- GARDNER, H. (2000). *Inteligência: um conceito reformulado* [Intelligence: a reviewed concept]. Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva.
- _____. (1983). *Frames of mind: the theory of multiple intelligences*. NY: Basic Books.
- GUENTHER, Z. (1995). A Center for Talent Development in Brazil. *Gifted and Talented International*, Vol. X, No 1, pp. 26-30.
- _____. (1995). CEDET - Guia de Orientação ao Voluntário [CEDET – the volunteer orientation guide]. UFLA - Proext, Ano IV, No 01, Lavras, MG.
- GUENTHER, Z. (1996). CEDET – três anos trabalhando com escolares bem dotados e talentosos em Lavras-MG [CEDET – three years working with gifted and talented students], *Revista Integração, MEC* Ano 7, No. 17, p. 6-10.
- GUENTHER, Z. (1997) *Educando o Ser Humano – uma abordagem da Psicologia Humanista* [Educating the human being – a humanistic approach]. FAEPE (UFLA) - Mercado das Letras, Campinas, S. P.
- _____. (1999). Desenvolvendo Talentos – o CEDET [Developing talent – the CEDET]. *Saber Educar, Escola Superior de Educação Paula Frassinetti*, Porto, Portugal, No. 4, pág. 79-83
- _____. (2000) *Desenvolver Capacidades e Talentos – Um conceito de inclusão* [Developing capacities and talent – a concept of inclusion]. Editora Vozes, Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro.
- _____. (2000) The International Program Perspective: Identification through Guided Observation in Brazil. *Gifted and Talented International*, V. XV, N. 2, pp.130-133.
- _____. (2002) Crescimento pessoal e interação social como objetivos de programas para educação de bem dotado [Personal growth and social

- interaction as objectives in educating the gifted]. *Revista Sobredotação – ANEIS*, Braga, Portugal, Vol 3., no. 1, pp. 61 – 70.
- _____. (2002) Identificando Crianças Bem Dotadas – Uma abordagem “non testing” [Identifying gifted children – a non testing approach]. *Saber Educar*, N.7, ESE Paula Frassinetti, Porto, Portugal, pp. 93-106.
- _____. (2003). CEDET - Center for talent development, Lavras, M.G. Brazil. In F.J. Mönks & H. Wagner (Eds.), *Development of human potential: Investment into our future*. ECHA: K.H. Bock, pp. 223-226.
- GUENTHER, Z.; COMBS, A. (1980) *Educação de pessoas* [Educating people]. FUMARC, Belo Horizonte, MG.
- GUENTHER, Z. CARVALHO, J. E SILVA, D. (1985) *Uma Proposta Educacional* [An educational proposal]. Fundação José Carvalho, ABC, Salvador, Bahia
- HANNEL, G. (1991) The complications of being gifted. In *Gifted Education International*, v. 7 p 126-128.
- HÉDOUX, Jacques (1994) Sciences humaines, pratiques de formation et praticiens: des rapports complexes.[Human sciences, practice and practitioners: complex approaches] In *Revue Contradictions*, no. 76, pp 3-37. Brussels, Belgium.
- HICKSON, J. (1992) A framework for guidance and counselling of the gifted in a school setting. *Gifted Education International*, v. 8, n. 2.
- LANDAU, Erika (1987) *El vivir creativo*. Barcelona, Herder.
- _____. (2002) *A coragem de ser superdotado* [The courage to be gifted]. São Paulo, Arte e Ciência.
- LÉVY, P. (1995) *L'intelligence collective*. Paris, La Découverte.
- MAIER, N. Advocacy as a Force in the Education of the Gifted and Talented. In HELLER, K. A.; MONKS, F. J.; PASSOW, A. H. (1993). *International*

Handbook for research and development of giftedness and talent. Oxford, Pergamon Press.

MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO E DO DESPORTO – Secretaria de Educação Especial (1994) *Política Nacional de Educação Especial*, Brasília –MEC.

MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO E DO DESPORTO – Secretaria de Educação Especial (2002) *Desenvolvendo Competências para o atendimento às necessidades educacionais de alunos com Altas Habilidades/Superdotação*, Brasília, MEC.

MOON, S. M. (2001) Personal Talent: What it is and how can we study it? (Paper) Fifth Biennial Wallace National Research Symposium on Talent Development Iowa City, IA

MOON, S. (2003) Developing Personal Talent. In Monks, F. and Wagner, H. *Development of Human Potential: Investment into our Future*. ECHA, K. H. Bock, pp.11 – 21.

NETTA, M. ELAUB, F. (2003) The “Arrow” – A special program in scientific research for gifted high school students. In Monks, F. and Wagner, H. *Development of Human Potential: Investment into our Future*. ECHA, K. H. Bock, pp. 216-218.

NOVAES, M. Helena (1979) *Desenvolvimento psicológico do superdotado* [Psychological development of gifted children]. São Paulo, Atlas.

NOVAES, M. H. (1999) *Compromisso ou alienação frente ao próximo século* [Facing next century: commitment or alienation]. Rio de Janeiro: Nau.

PYRYT, M. C. (2003) Social Giftedness: Historical, psychometric and educational perspectives. In Monks, F. and Wagner, H. *Development of Human Potential: Investment into our Future*. ECHA, K. H. Bock, pp. 86-88.

RACHMEL, S.; ZORMAN, R (2003) Enhancing Gifted Students as path breakers. The Israeli experience. In Monks, F. and Wagner, H. *Development of*

Human Potential: Investment into our Future. ECHA: K. H. Bock, pp. 119-122.

RENZULLI, J. S. (1978) What Makes Giftedness? Reexamining a Definition. *Chronicle Guidance Professional Service P991*. (pp. 1-6). Moravia: Chronicle Guidance.

_____. (1986). The Three-ring conception of Giftedness: A developmental Model for Creative Productivity. *The Triad Reader*. Connecticut: Creative Learning Press.

_____. The Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness. In BAUM, S. M., REIS, S. M., & MAXFIELD, L. R. (Eds.). (1998). *Nurturing the gifts and talents of primary grade students*. Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press.

_____. (1999) What is this thing called giftedness, and how we develop it? A twenty-five year perspective. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 23(1), 3-54.

RIBEIRO, R. J. (2003) *A Universidade e a vida atual* [The university and contemporary life]. Rio de Janeiro, Campus.

ROSEMBERG, Rachel (1973) *Psicologia dos superdotados* [Psychology of the gifted] . Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio.

SANTOS, Oswaldo de B. (ed.) (1978) *Orientação e desenvolvimento do potencial humano* [Counseling and development of human potential]. São Paulo: Pioneira.

SARING, B. (2003) Concept formation in open experimental environments: Elements of a science curriculum for gifted high school students. In Monks, F. and Wagner, H. *Development of Human Potential: Investment into our Future*. ECHA: K. H. Bock, pp.190-192.

STERNBERG, R. J. (1987) *Inteligencia humana - la naturaleza de la inteligencia y su medición*. Barcelona: Ediciones Paidós.

- STERNBERG, R. J. (2000) Creativity and Giftedness - Identifying and Developing Creative Giftedness In: Roeper Review. 23(2), 60–64.
- STERNBERG, R.J.; LUBERT, T.I. (1999) The Concept of Creativity: Prospects and paradigms. In: STERNBERG, R.J. (ed.) *Handbook of Creativity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- TIRRI, K. (2003) Morality and High Ability. In Monks, F. and Wagner, H. *Development of Human Potential: Investment into our Future*. ECHA, K. H. Bock, pp. 69 – 76.
- VIRGOLIM, FLEITH e NEVES-PEREIRA (1999) *Toc, Toc Plim, Plim – Lidando com as Emoções, Brincando com o Pensamento Através da Criatividade* [Dealing with emotions and playing with thought through creativity]. Sao Paulo, Papirus Editora.
- WESCHLER, S. M. (1998). *Criatividade: Descobrimos e Encorajando*. Campinas: Psy.
- _____ (2001) Criatividade na cultura brasileira: Uma década de estudos. *Psicologia: Teoria, Investigação e Prática*, 6, 215-226.

About the authors:

Dr. Zenita Cunha Guenther - Educational Psychologist, with a career in Humanistic Psychology and Gifted Education; after an early retirement from The University of Minas Gerais started in 1993 a Community Center for Gifted Children the interior of Brasil, which still is the center of her activities. Writes and publish extensively in Brasil and Portugal where she also gives courses and seminars for teachers and parents. Honorary Member of the Brazilian Council for the Gifted – ConBraSD.

Dr. Christina Cupertino – Psychologist, Psychology Doctor's degree in Creativity at Pontifícia Universidade Católica- SP, General Coordinator of Objetivo Project for Fostering Talent (POIT) and Psychology teacher in Paulista University - UNIP, in Sao Paulo, Brasil. Researcher in Gifted Education and Creativity. Member of the Brazilian Council for the Gifted – ConBraSD.

Dr. Cristina Maria Carvalho Delou – Psychologist, Education Doctor's degree; Assistant Professor to the Education School/UFF; responsible for Projeto de Atendimento a Alunos com Altas Habilidades/Superdotação.

Susana Graciela Pérez Barrera Pérez, Bachelor in Fine Arts from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul state (UFRGS), with specialization in Special Education - High Abilities (UFRGS); Education Master's degree student at Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul state (PUCRS). Member of the Board and Technical Committee of Associação Gaúcha de Apoio às Altas Habilidades/Superdotação (AGAAHSD) and founder, member of the Board and Technical Committee of the Brazilian Council for Giftedness (ConBraSD). Took part of several training courses and conferences on High Abilities/Giftedness promoted by State and Municipal Education Departments, public and private schools and universities within Rio Grande do Sul and Paraná states. Born in 05/19/1956 at Montevideo, Uruguay, currently a Brazilian citizen, living in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul state.