

Social Interaction of Gifted Students in a Heterogeneous Educational Environment

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Abstract : Understanding interpersonal competence, social interaction and peer relationships of gifted children is a concern for specialists in the field of gifted education. To gain more in-depth knowledge concerning the social functioning of gifted children among peers, we decided to study the social abilities of gifted children in a heterogeneous academic environment. Eight gifted children (5 of age 7, 1 of age 8.5, 1 of age 9.5 and 1 of age 10), their classmates (10 of age 7-8, 12 of age 8.5-9, 16 of age 9.5-10) and teachers participated in the study. The sociometric questionnaire analysis was based on the method of Rodríguez and Morera to check the social status of the gifted children among classmates. The Instrument Observational Protocol for Interactions within the Classroom (OPINTEC-v.5) was used to assess the social interactions between the gifted students, their classmates, and the teacher within the educational context. While doing a task together, the gifted children interacted more with popular and neither popular nor gifted classmates than with rejected classmates. While spending time together, the gifted children interacted more with neither popular nor rejected classmates than with popular or rejected classmates. All gifted children chose other gifted and non-gifted classmates for interaction, established close relations and demonstrated good social abilities interacting with their classmates. The aim of this study was to examine the social interactions, social status, and social network of the gifted students in a regular classroom. The majority of the gifted children were popular among their classmates and had good social skills. We should be alert, though, for those gifted children who do have social problems, in order to help them functioning in a regular classroom.

Keywords : gifted, heterogeneous environment, sociometric status, social interactions

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