

EDITORIAL

The Center for Talented Youth model: 25 years of fostering talent

It is, for me, a true honor and a great professional privilege to have been invited to be the Guest Editor of this issue of High Ability Studies, which is dedicated to a brief study of some of the foundations and developments of one of the models of educational intervention for high ability students which has had most impact and influence in the world, and on which undoubtedly most research has been carried out (see Reyero & Tourón, 2003; http://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/depts/psych_and_hd/smpy/).

I hope you will have as much pleasure in reading it as I have had in planning and coordinating it with the inestimable help of my colleagues from the Center for Talented Youth, especially Carol Mills and Linda Brody. I am in debt to them and to all the contributors of this number of High Ability Studies, which I am sure will hold a special place on all of our bookshelves.

This number is divided into four parts, the first of which analyzes the underlying theories of the model as it was conceived at the beginning of the 1970s by Professor Julian Stanley on referring to the 'Study of mathematically precocious youth' or SMPY, which has been the basis of the Center for Talented Youth since 1979. Chance, which in research we refer to as serendipity and which is only recognized by someone prepared for it, made him pay attention to Joe, an extraordinarily brilliant young man, although, as he mentions in his work, 'At first I was somewhat hesitant and perhaps even reluctant (and slow) to get involved But I did, and my life and career thereafter have never been the same'. We could also add 'fortunately', because the work of Professor Stanley marked and continues to be a milestone in the research and education of high ability students which has no historical precedent. This is not an exalted, subjective valuation, the fruit of my recognition of his intellectual prowess or because of the friendship with which Professor Stanley honors me. It is simply a matter of fact for any attentive observer.

The Center for Talented Youth model, one of whose central elements is 'talent search', cannot be more parsimonious or, if you prefer, simple. The reader will agree with me that only a person steeped in specialized work on measurement and experimental methodology, as is Professor Stanley (is there anyone who has not quoted dozens of times Campbell and Stanley or Glass and Stanley when they were explaining experimental design to their students?), could have conceived and made operative what we now take to be obvious: a need for out of level testing to avoid the test ceiling effect.

Development and progress of the model over the last 25 years and its impact on the American education system, together with its adoption by other US universities and, today the Center for Talented Youth international affiliates, make what is now known as the Center for Talented Youth model one of the most successful educational initiatives in the development of talent and serves hundreds of thousands of students every year. The institution which welcomed this instrument, the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, and particularly its Center for Talented Youth, has been

doing an immense job in the identification and development of young people's talent, not only Americans but also those from other countries (www.cty.jhu.edu).

One of the chapters of the recent report *A nation deceived: how schools hold back American's brightest students* (www.nationdeceived.org) is called 'The talent search revolution' (Colangelo, Assouline & Gross, 2004) and briefly explains the importance of the identification of talent with the end of developing it. Thus, identification of capacity makes sense if it is with the intention of intervening educationally, and identification and programs should form an inseparable binary system. The second part of this issue is dedicated to these questions (discovering and nurturing talent). As you already know, several North American universities have adopted the philosophy and practice of the model developed by the Center for Talented Youth in Johns Hopkins University. That is why it seemed important to include, together with a description of 'talent search' and the programs developed in this university, some examples of activities carried out in other universities. The contributions of Duke University (<http://www.tip.duke.edu>), Northwestern University (<http://ctdnet.acns.nwu.edu/>) and Denver University (<http://www.du.edu/education/ces/rmts.html>) are excellent examples of extension of the model within the USA. In fact, talent searches now cover all the States of the Union.

The greatest trees grow from the smallest seeds. This is what has happened in SMPY. Having started as a small initiative, it has developed enormously and over the years it has grown and offered new initiatives and services. One particularly important case is that of distance learning, whose procedures and possibilities are discussed extensively in one of the articles in the third part of this issue.

When studying the education of high ability students one immediately notices the great differences that can exist. In fact, the variability in any group of gifted students reproduces the differences in groups we call regular. Because of this, the attention paid to especially capable students has received special attention in one of the articles, which introduces us to a special focus within the general model.

An excellent job of synthesis concludes this part, making clear what was, from the beginning, a condition for the development of the model: its strong commitment to research and evaluation of the results of its educational interventions.

However, in the last 10 years the model has crossed the oceans. Other cultures and continents have accepted and used it, finding similar basic results. That is why the last part of this number is dedicated to international extension of the model.

Three examples illustrate this international dimension of the Center for Talented Youth model. The work done by the European Centers for Talented Youth, that in Ireland (www.dcu.ie/ctyi/), which was established 12 years ago, and the recently created Center for Talented Youth Spain (2001) (www.ctys.net), is covered, each from its own perspective, up to the present moment. Both are original charter members of Center for Talented Youth International, an association created by the

Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins University in the middle 1990s. Another example of extension and adaptation of the model is found in the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY), which is being developed, supported by the British government, at Warwick University (www.warwick.ac.uk/gifted/) and which has rapidly been extended to other British universities and colleges. There are also other recent initiatives which are not represented in this volume (i.e. Bermuda and Thailand).

Summing up, I believe that the reader has in his hands a reasonably wide review of an educational initiative which has had important transnational use, with results which are comparable. This gives the instrument even more value, if that is possible, and assures us of its educational validity. Obviously, there is still a lot to be done, but at least we are sufficiently sure of which path to take to deal efficiently with high ability students.

As far as I know, this is the first time that a scientific review of this model at this level has been presented in a single issue. I should like to thank the Chief Editor of High Ability Studies, Professor Albert Ziegler, for agreeing to carry out my proposal. I have no doubt that this number will in the future be considered historical in a certain way.

References

Colangelo, N., Assouline, S. & Gross, M. (2004) The talent search revolution, in: N. Colangelo, S. Assouline & M. Gross (Eds) *A nation deceived: how schools hold back America's brightest students*, Vol. 1. The Templeton National Report on Acceleration (Iowa City, IA, University of Iowa). Available online at: <http://www.nationdeceived.org> (accessed 26 May 2005).

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