Recommendation 1248 (1994)[1]

Education for gifted children

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly reaffirms education as a fundamental human right, and believes that it should, as far as possible, be appropriate to each individual.

2. Whereas for practical purposes education systems must be set up so as to provide adequate education for the majority of children, there will always be children with special needs and for whom special arrangements have to be made. One group of such children is that of the highly gifted.

3. Gifted children should be able to benefit from appropriate educational conditions that would allow them to develop fully their abilities, for their own benefit and for the benefit of society as a whole. No country can indeed afford to waste talents and it would be a waste of human resources not to identify in good time any intellectual or other potentialities. Adequate tools are needed for this purpose.

4. Special educational provision should, however, in no way privilege one group of children to the detriment of the others.

5. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers ask the competent authorities of the states signatory to the European Cultural Convention to take account of the following considerations in their educational policies:

5.1. legislation should recognise and respect individual differences. Highly gifted children, as with other categories, need adequate educational opportunities to develop their full potential;

5.2. basic research in the fields of "giftedness" and "talent" and applied research, for instance to improve identification procedures, should be developed in parallel. Research on the "mechanisms of success" could help to tackle school failure;

5.3. meanwhile, in-service teacher training programmes have to include strategies for identifying children of high ability or special talent. Information on gifted children should be made available to all those who deal with children (teachers, parents, doctors, social workers, ministries of education, etc.);

5.4. provision for specially gifted children in a given subject area should preferably be arranged within the ordinary school system, from pre-school education onwards. Flexible curricula, more chances of mobility, enriching supplementary material, audiovisual aids and project-oriented teaching styles are ways and techniques to foster the development of all children, whether highly gifted or not, and enable the identification of special needs at the earliest possible time;

5.5. the ordinary school system should be made flexible enough to enable the needs of high performers or talented students to be met;

5.6. any special provision for highly gifted or talented students should be administered with discretion, to avoid the innate danger of labelling, with all its undesired consequences to society.

1. Assembly debate on 7 October 1994 (31st Sitting) (see Doc. 7140, report of the Committee on Culture and Education, Rapporteur: Mr Hadjidemetriou). Text adopted by the Assembly on 7 October 1994 (31st Sitting).

6. There is a need to clarify the notion of "giftedness" by an operational definition that is accepted and understandable in different languages. Therefore, the Assembly further recommends that the Committee of Ministers consider the setting-up of an ad hoc committee for this purpose including psychologists, sociologists, and educationalists of all relevant specialisations.