

Career Decision-Making of Gifted Students

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ABSTRACT

This paper consists of reviews of various articles related to career decision-making of gifted students. The reviews range over the years 1982 to 2019. Three major outcomes are highlighted after detailed review of those articles. The most common factor regarding career decision making of gifted student reveals that these students face difficulty while deciding about their career. The next important finding of reviewed articles refers to cause of their career indecision. Accordingly, multi-potentiality is stated as a major cause of their indecision as they have potential to excel in multiple fields. Third one is about the suggestive measures of career counseling for gifted students to get over the indecisive issue.

Key Words: Career decision-making, gifted students, career-counselling, multi-potentiality

INTRODUCTION

Gifted students are alternatively known as 'Precocious Students'. They come under the umbrella term of 'Exceptional Children'. In the views of W. B. Kolesnik, "The term gifted has been applied to every child who is in his group, is superior in some ability which may make him an outstanding contributor to the welfare and quality living in our society." If proper educational arrangements are made for them, they may prove to be boons to the society. Weschler (1958) was of the view that learners having I. Q. 120 and above may be called as gifted or genius. Some others suggest that 130 and above I.Q. students are termed as gifted (Pintner, 1923; Weschler, 1981; Kaufman, 1993; Naglieri, 1997; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2003; Elliott, 2007; Woodcock, 2007) whereas according to some others 140 and above I.Q. students are labelled as precocious students (Terman. 1916; Kaufman, 2009).

In the views of Witty (1940), "Gifted children are those children whose performance in a worthwhile human endeavour is consistently remarkable and those who are academically superior." Havinghust (1958) too defined gifted children in quite the same way. In his words, "The talented or gifted child is one who shows constantly remarkable performance or outstanding behaviour in any worthwhile endeavour." So, it can be said that a gifted child shows remarkable performance in any effort consistently. The remarkable performance does not happen by chance. Rather it is a continuous process. Giftedness of a person makes it possible in his/her part.

Career decision-making is a vital component in every student's life. It is true that everyone wants to pursue a good career and prosper in that direction. But the way someone perceives a good career may differ from other. A career choice that sounds good to someone may not sound good to another person. In that way, gifted students also perceive a good career in different ways. A study stated that gifted students perceive a good career from two point of view viz. earning good amount of money and having a prestige in society (Ozcan, 2017) while other studies inferred different meaning of a good career. Wise decision-making regarding career choices have a great importance not only in gifted students' life, but in the lives of all students.

Petersen (1982) conducted a study entitled "Gifted Children and Career Decision-Making". The study focuses on influence of interests, abilities, and values on career decisions among adolescents and their personal responsibility for their educational and occupational decision. The sample comprised of 31 gifted students of secondary schools (8th, 9th and 10th Grade students). They were assessed through personal interview using Vocational Planning Interview Schedule. Interest and ability were found to be the contributing factors towards Career Decision-Making. The study revealed that students were decisive in their education without knowing how it would contribute towards deciding their careers.

Plucker & Levy (1999) discussed about the downside of being talented. They stated that though giftedness can provide a lot of positive experiences, there lies a downside of it. Various literatures have mentioned that some talented and gifted students are underachievers and have failed to develop their talents (Dowdall & Colangelo, 1982; Emerick, 1992; Plucker & Levy Hoover-Schultz, 2005; Rubenstein, Siegle, Reis, McCoach & Burton, 2012). They face many roadblocks in attainment of their professional success. In our society, all live with a mind-set that the gifted students must be doing well in various dimensions of their lives. By holding such mind-set, we not only fail to provide them appropriate education with career counselling but also damage their emotional and social development (Lubinski & Bembow, 2000). Some of the common issues of gifted students are the pressure of performing consistently at higher levels, feeling of failure, feeling of inadequacy outside their domains of expertise, feeling of isolation when they need someone's help. Plucker & Levy (1999) suggested that although gifted students possess high level of multi-potentialities, they should be navigated by their parents, teachers, elders, peers, employers in some respects. Life's choices are complex for all including gifted and talented ones.

A study was carried out to examine the correctness of the multi-potentialities and vocational interests of the gifted adolescents (Milgram & Hong, 1999). For this purpose, two samples (N= 217 & 322) were selected from the database of Israel Defence Force (IDF). The study contained only boys so the result could not be generalized to gifted females. An intelligent test was carried out to select the gifted participants. It consisted of two parts: one verbal, vocabulary and comprehension and other one, non-verbal. Three measures of intellectual abilities: verbal, mathematical, mechanical and three measures of vocational interest: science, social and artistic, were considered for the current study. The performance of the non-academic activities is regarded as the early indicators of vocational interest according to the studies of the researchers. The instruments for measuring three kinds of intellectual abilities and vocational interest were administered on the two samples. According to the findings of the study, very small proportion of gifted adolescents showed a wide variety of high-level interests and abilities. A large proportion of intellectually gifted adolescents were found to have low level of undifferentiated vocational interest or no focus of interest towards a specific domain. The study suggested that the assumption about multi-potentialities of highly gifted students and thus their career counselling or education should be reconsidered.

Stewart (1999) intended to review seven career development and occupational choice difficulties which may be experienced by academically gifted students and to suggest measures for helping them move beyond each difficulty. The seven mentioned difficulties were narrowing the occupational choice, indecision, vocational identity formation, lack of occupational meaningfulness, early emerger, pressure from others and lack of occupational role models. The study revealed that though there is a myth about academically gifted students being able to do anything they want in life, actually they face many difficulties in their career decision-making. Therefore, they need career counsellor for effective decision-making regarding career. But the counsellor should also consider the fact that there are also diversities in gifted students. Not every gifted student faces difficulty in career decision-making. Influence of the above said difficulties should be assessed properly and appropriate interventions should be made available to them.

Greene (2006) mentioned in an article that gifted students possess multi-potentiality which gives them the ability to do many things at high level of competence and enjoyment. At first sight, this multi-potentiality seems to be advantageous. But subsequently it makes them feel difficulty in their career decision-making. They are seen to get frustrated because of their internal conflicts regarding career decision-making. Facing trouble in decision making, may result into changing majors, delaying decisions, making premature choices, prolonged uncertainty, exploration, and frequent changes in area of study or occupation. These are commonly observed in multi-potential gifted children. Gifted children possess interests which are typically seen in adults or by the people who are more matured than their age. Due to their extra ordinary interests, they generally don't fit with their peer groups in schools. They feel internal and external pressures and the pressure of excelling academically. The article stated that gifted children are more likely to stick to a particular job instead of changing job, occupation and career for multiple times. Gifted and talented students' life path and career believed to be evolved from the quest of life satisfaction, purpose and meaning. On the other hand, the gifted students who are so good in visual or performing arts are generally discouraged to pursue their passion as their career because of the uncertainty of such professions and due to the perceived lack of financial stability. The career decision-making stands as great troubling task on the part of the gifted students and their family as well. The article suggested some measures to reduce the problems in gifted learners like interest inventories can be useful for these multi-potential students to know their prioritized interests. The author also suggested some measures to eliminate such career decision-making problems in elementary, middle school and secondary level gifted students.

The perception of highly successful gifted students about their experiences with teachers and thus identifying the characteristics of those teachers in influencing the career decision-making of their students was studied by Watters (2010). The study implied that the influential characteristics of teachers may change the students' dispositions to topics of interest. This study was undertaken in an educational system where students are not required to appear the state-wide testing before

the conclusion of high school. Moreover, there are no systematic process mandated for identification of gifted students. Demographic information was obtained from a survey followed by an interview data. According to this study, the gifted students are those whose performances are high on the combined core skill test and school-based assessment data. The choice of subjects undertaken by the students in the final year of high school was interpreted to represent their discipline orientation. 129 students were included in the survey whereas only 20 students appeared for the interview from whom qualitative data were collected. The first two sets of data obtained from survey describe the characteristics of the cohort of participants, their school history and provide the overview of courses students enrolled in the universities respectively. The qualitative data obtained from the interview provided the experiences of the interviewed students in relation to the roles played by the significant teachers. The study revealed that very small number of students was inspired by the teachers to choose the subject area of their teacher's expertise. No evidence was found that the teachers are fundamentally instrumental in orienting their students towards a particular career or discipline. Almost all the students described their passion towards their disciplinary area from a very early age although that passion got crystalized during their high schools. Nevertheless, there were some significant characteristics of the teachers which inspired the students to pursue their studies in particular disciplines.

In a study on career counselling for gifted students, Chen & Wong (2013) intended to apply the key tenets of career development and career counselling theories to career guidance of gifted high school students. The study also endeavours to examine the unique career related barriers and challenges faced by these students. Chen & Wong (2013) highlighted that although gifted students possess high intelligence and ability, they experience a unique constellation of challenges and barriers while making decisions about their careers.

Career decision-making of the gifted and talented students was explored by Ozcanin 2017. The objectives of the study were to find out the perception of gifted and talented students towards their future career decisions. It also aimed at finding out the visualisation of students about themselves in terms of their career ten years later. The sample of the study consists of 11 gifted and talented school students with I.Q. greater than 120. Semi-structured interview tool was used for qualitative data collection. The researcher found the factors like family, academic achievement, a sense of social responsibility and the desire to have a positive impact on the world etc. influence their career decision-making. The study also revealed that gifted and talented students visualise themselves in terms of their career in 10 years' time as being tortured by their occupations and working overseas. Students opined that a good career is the one which can allow them spending money and having prestige. Career self-management should be considered with much importance and every student specially the students with giftedness should be well aware of it.

Hnat (2018) undertook a study on gifted adolescents of New Zealand and linked them with career indecision. A group of 23years 13 students were identified as gifted by their school. The researcher employed mixed method i.e., sequential explanatory design. The first phase of the study involved quantitative data gathering from the gifted and talented adolescents via a self-report online questionnaire. The second phase involved qualitative data gathering from three participants by focused group discussion technique. The questions of focused group discussion were built on the results of first phase. Five items were constructed to know the career decision-making of the participants. The result showed that the girls displayed significantly higher career indecision than the boys. The females having higher multi-potentiality were found to have more career indecision than the females having lower multi-potentialities as they have more choices of career. The correlational analysis indicated that there is no significant correlation between multi-potentialities and career indecision of the male students however female students followed the trend i.e., the girls possessing more multi-potentialities, find it difficult to decide a particular career for them. They are unable to narrow down their career options.

Jung (2019), in his chapter "The Career Decisions of Gifted Students: An Asia- Pacific Perspective" mentioned about the career indecisiveness. One of his prime objectives was to outline the major problems related to career decision for gifted students in Asia- Pacific region. The chapter stated that gifted students in this region are more likely to face difficulty in career decision-making which is a very serious issue. He outlined major two issues i.e., internal conflicts and impoverished background of the students. Internal conflicts include issues like capability in multiple career fields, confusion between a career choice that is good for a gifted student and career choice of one's own interest. Some other factors relating to impoverished background are low career expectations, improper career related information and limited career related experiences. Jung also stated that unfortunately, most of the gifted students belonging to this region don't have access to career counselling, necessary information, and resources to support and strengthen their career decisions.

It is commonly believed that gifted students are quite sure about their career decisions. From the reviews cited above, it is found that gifted students face a lot of difficulties in making career choices (Milgram & Hong, 1999; Plucker & Levy, 1999; Stewart, 1999; Greene, 2006; Chen & Wong, 2013; Ozcan, 2017; Hnat, 2018; Jung, 2019). On the other hand, Peterson

(1982) revealed that though gifted students are decisive about their education, but they don't have any idea how that education could contribute to their career decision-making.

Researchers like Milgram & Hong (1999), Stewart (1999), Chen & Wong (2013), Chen, Chen, Hu & Wang (2013), Kurt (2016) and Jung (2019) emphasized upon career counselling for academically gifted students to make them career decisive. They should be provided with effective career guidance to strengthen their career decision-making process and to choose their choicest career. Gifted students are generally believed to have multiple potentialities (Marshall, 1981; Emmett & Minor, 1993; Milgram & Hong, 1999; Plucker & Levy, 1999; Greene, 2006; Kurt, 2016; Hnat, 2018). So, they possess a wide variety of vocational interest. Though it seems to be advantageous for many reasons but, for this reason, it is difficult on the part of the gifted and talented learners to choose a specific area of study (Milgram & Hong, 1999). They have a wide range of career options before them. They need to be guided for choosing that career which would be appropriate to them. Hnat (2018) conducted a comparative study of career decision-making between the gifted boys and gifted girls in relation to their multi-potentialities. The girls were found to be more career indecisive as compared to their counterpart. The study also revealed that the girls having more multi-potentialities are showing more career indecision than the girls having less multi-potentialities. Greene (2006) suggested administering interest inventories to know their prioritized interests so that their difficulty in choosing a particular career can be mitigated.

Some common issues are seen in gifted students which arise out of their career indecisive attitudes like altering majors, late decisions, making premature choices, prolonged uncertainty, exploration, and frequent changes in domain of study or job (Greene, 2006). Stewart (1999) also stated seven problems related to occupational decision-making that are commonly experienced by academically gifted students viz. narrow occupational choices, indecisiveness, vocational identity formation, lack of occupational meaningfulness, pre-matured occupational choice, pressure from significant others and need for occupational role models. Moreover, according to experts, gifted and talented students show uniqueness in career decision-making in some way or other (Emmett & Minor, 1993; Kelly, 1996; Perrone, 1997). Thus, it can be concluded from the above studies that career decision-making can be considered as a serious concern among the gifted and talented learners as they have a lot of career choices because of their multi-potentialities. This needs to be eliminated by various career guidance and counselling programmes.

Table-1: Summary of Reviews

Dimensions	Author	Year	Findings
Career Decision-Making of Gifted Students	Petersen	1982	Students were decisive in their education without knowing how it would contribute towards deciding their careers
	Plucker & Levy	1999	Gifted students possess high level of multi-potentialities. They should be navigated by their parents, teachers, elders, peers, employers in some respects. Life's choices are complex for all including gifted and talented ones.
	Milgram & Hong	1999	A large proportion of intellectually gifted adolescents were found to have low level of undifferentiated vocational interest or no focus of interest towards a specific domain. The study suggested that the assumption about multi-potentialities of highly gifted students and thus their career counselling or education should be reconsidered.
	Stewart	1999	Not every gifted student faces difficulty in career decision-making. Proper and appropriate interventions should be made available to them to get over of this difficulty.
	Greene	2006	The career decision-making stands as great troubling task on the part of the gifted students.
	Watters	2010	Very small number of students was inspired by the teachers to choose the subject area of their teacher's expertise. No evidence was found that the teachers are fundamentally instrumental in orienting their students towards a particular career or discipline. Almost all the students described their passion towards their disciplinary area from a very early age although that passion got crystalized during their high schools.
	Chen & Wong	2013	Although gifted students possess high intelligence and

			ability, they experience a unique constellation of challenges and barriers while making decisions about their careers.
	Ozcan	2017	Factors like family, academic achievement, a sense of social responsibility and the desire to have a positive impact on the world etc. influence career decision-making of gifted students. Gifted and talented students visualise themselves in terms of their career in 10 years' time as being tortured by their occupations and working overseas. Students opined that a good career is the one which can allow them spending money and having prestige..
	Hnat	2018	Girls displayed significantly higher career indecision than the boys. The females having higher multi-potentiality were found to have more career indecision than the females having lower multi-potentialities as they have more choices of career. There is no significant correlation between multi-potentialities and career indecision of the male students however female students followed the trend i.e., the girls possessing more multi-potentialities, find it difficult to decide a particular career for them. They are unable to narrow down their career options.
	Jung	2019	Gifted students in this region are more likely to face difficulty in career decision-making which is a very serious issue. He outlined major two issues i.e., internal conflicts and impoverished background of the students.

From the above table, it can be summarized that three major outcomes are emerged out of the detailed review of articles related to career decision-making of gifted students. The most common one is maximum gifted students face difficulty while deciding about their career. Secondly, multi-potentiality is seen to be one of the major causes of this indecision. Thirdly, they should be guided or counselled properly to choose appropriate career for themselves.

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