

# **THE ROLE OF EXPERT ASSESSMENT IN EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF ABOVE AVERAGE ABILITIES OF GIFTED STUDENTS**

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**Abstract.** The purpose of the research is to establish whether there is a correlation between results achieved by young primary school students at standardised intelligence tests and evaluation of their intelligence done by their teachers, parents, coevals, including self-evaluation as well. The sample consisted of 151 students, chosen as listed by teachers of 11 primary schools located within the Republic of Srpska. The following instruments were applied in the research: Coloured Progressive Matrices (CPM), Comprehension subtest (REWISC subtest – Revised Scale of Children’s Intelligence by Wechsler), and a comprehensive survey-scaler containing 135 particles in the form of statements systemised in nine areas of giftedness i.e. intelligence, according to Gardner, has been developed for all of the evaluator groups. Results show that there is a statistically significant correlation between standardised intelligence test results and those obtained through evaluation done by all the four evaluator groups.

*Keywords:* giftedness, multiple intelligences, assessment

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## **Introduction**

The existence of proofs of multiple intelligence early identification (Chan, 2007; Tirri & Nokelainen, 2008; Bordelon & Banbury 2005; Hernández-Torrano, 2014) in intelligence evaluation justifies the attempt to develop adequate instruments in line with the theory which is currently most widespread applied in school conditions.

Basic idea used as a start-point in the research is the existence of a possibility to innovate the teaching process while working with gifted students, by applying the instruments created to evaluate their giftedness. It is assumed that the system of working and learning with gifted students at schools would be significantly improved with an adequately developed and conceived system of early identification based upon applying a reliable apparatus structured on the principles of modern theory of abilities and giftedness.

A recent study shows that the identification itself is still one of the topics most frequently analysed in scientific literature relevant to education of the gifted (Dai et al., 2011; McBee et al., 2014).

Modern theories of giftedness rely on information gathered in relation to a complex approach to this phenomenon, with no particular emphasis on any of the numerous factors leading to a conclusion that someone is gifted. Thus, modern approaches to giftedness imply inclusion of a large number of factors into the process of identifying students' giftedness, along with their active participation in development and in social promotion. In this respect, many authors (Callahan et al., 1995, Han & Marvin 2000) suggest that the following recommendations should be considered for the purpose of a successful identification process: to select a clear definition of giftedness, to avoid using one limit value only, to consider various forms of talent manifestation, to use various instruments for assessment of different areas of intelligence, to bear in mind that giftedness shows in various forms, to develop a basis for student's educational needs, founded on the identification, to perform a repeated evalua-

tion after certain period, in order to establish whether there are more gifted students present.

Educational institutions are expected not to reduce their communication with gifted children to dealing with individual cases, but to develop a system of measures to regulate category status of gifted children, at the same time providing for their specific educational needs to be satisfied (Maksić & Tenjović, 2008).

## **Methodology**

### *The objective of the research*

To establish whether there is a correlation between results achieved by young primary school students at standardised intelligence tests and evaluation of their intelligence done by their teachers, parents, coevals, as well as through self-evaluation.

### *The hypothesis of the research*

It is assumed that there is a correlation between standardised intelligence test results and those obtained through evaluation done by all of the four evaluator groups.

### *Research sample*

Teachers of eleven primary schools selected within the Republic of Srpska, were assigned to implement Instructions on Nomination (developed based upon Rating List of most capable students' skills, according to the teachers (Đorđević, 1998), and they select most capable students of Years Three and Four, who would participate in the research directly. 151 students were selected, which is in this particular case the sample of the research. The research includes 11 primary schools located at the area of Republic Srpska, more precisely in its three regions: Zvornik, Bijeljina and Romanija.

**Table 1.** Structure of the sample of listed students

Social-Demographic Characteristics	Charac-	f	%
Gender	Male	69	45.7
	Female	82	54.3
	<i>Total</i>	<i>151</i>	<i>100</i>
Year	Three	80	53
	Four	71	47
	<i>Total</i>	<i>151</i>	<i>100</i>

### *Research instruments*

The sample of 151 listed students was tested as to their abilities, applying standardised instruments and using a group test to measure their general intellectual abilities (Coloured Progressive Matrices) and Comprehension subtest (WISC subtest – Revised Scale of Children’s Intelligence by Wechsler).

Assessment of their abilities was performed simultaneously. The focus of the research were nine areas of giftedness according to Gardner’s multiple intelligence theory (Gardner, 1985; 1993; 1999): verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical-rhythmical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic and philosophic-spiritual; where the presence thereof with the listed students was evaluated by four groups of evaluators: teachers, parents, coevals and there was self-evaluation included as well. For the needs of evaluation of these nine intelligence types, a comprehensive survey-scaler was developed for all of the evaluator groups, containing 135 particles in the form of statements, classified into nine areas of giftedness, i.e. intelligence. The task of the evaluators was to assess their agreement to each statement, on a five-degree Likert-type scale. Interpretation of the scale used in evaluation of the extent of a/m intelligence type development, has been organised in the ascending order: 1 – completely disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - neutral, 4 - agree and 5 – completely agree. All of the statements were formed as positive ones, and the overall result was expressed as a sum of all the evaluations in

individual scales. In order to test the internal consistence of the entire survey, Cronbach alpha test was used for each evaluator group separately.

**Table 2.** Reliability of scales for evaluation of multiple intelligences

Type of Intelligence	Cronbach Alpha Test			
	Scales for Teachers	Scales for Parents	Scales for Coevals	Scales for Self-Evaluation
Verbal-linguistic	0.881	0.887	0.908	0.913
Logical-mathematical	0.884	0.873	0.904	0.910
Visual-spatial	0.876	0.876	0.901	0.916
Bodily-kinaesthetic	0.903	0.893	0.913	0.916
Musical-rhythmic	0.885	0.885	0.907	0.922
Interpersonal	0.873	0.880	0.904	0.910
Intrapersonal	0.882	0.869	0.907	0.911
Naturalistic	0.882	0.869	0.907	0.911
Spiritual-philosophic	0.873	0.863	0.912	0.906

The level of minimal, generally accepted consistency based on which the level of Cronbach alpha reliability is usually established equals 0.7, and since the Cronbach alpha calculated in this survey ranges from .873 to .922, which can, according to George & Mallery (2003) classification, be considered exceptionally high internal consistency of questions formed in the survey, the questions formed following the Likert scales can be confirmed as consistent.

#### *Methods and techniques*

In order to establish whether there is a correlation between evaluation results obtained by all of the four evaluator groups, pertaining to each variable separately, and standardised tests, Pearson coefficient of correlation was applied, whereupon a coefficient of multiple correlation was calculated to ascer-

tain a correlation between overall evaluations and standardised instruments. Pearson coefficient of correlation has shown an existence of positive and statistically significant correlation of the evaluations done by all of the four groups of evaluators, with both test results; whereas the evaluations and Comprehension subtest results are mutually related to a higher extent.

### Results

In the course of analysing the test distribution and deciding on the type of test to be applied, an analysis of distribution normality using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests (Razali & Wah, 2011) was performed, where normality of distribution was determined prior to each testing

**Table 3.** Analysis of distribution normality

Type of Intelligence	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	Shapiro-Wilks Test
Verbal-linguistic	0.200	0.625
Logical-mathematical	0.066	0.062
Visual-spatial	0.078	0.057
Bodily-kinaesthetic	0.076	0.099
Musical-rhythmic	0.073	0.096
Interpersonal	0.071	0.058
Intrapersonal	0.083	0.085
Naturalistic	0.200	0.414
Spiritual-philosophic	0.077	0.121

Testing the result distribution normality of tests for multiple intelligence evaluation has shown that there is no deviation from normal distribution in any of the variables.

To confirm the homogeneity of the variance, Levene (1960) test was applied.

**Table 4.** Analysis of variance homogeneity

Type of Intelligence	Levene Test Statistics	<i>P</i>
Verbal-linguistic	1.03	0.377
Logical-mathematical	6.91	0.649
Visual-spatial	0.20	0.896
Bodily-kinaesthetic	1.20	0.310
Musical-rhythmic	0.66	0.579
Interpersonal	0.74	0.530
Intrapersonal	0.77	0.509
Naturalistic	0.82	0.484
Spiritual-philosophic	4.59	0.003

Following the level of significance due to Levene test, which was higher than 0.05 in eight variables, no significant differences between the answers of various groups have been found. Test for evaluation of spiritual-philosophic/existential intelligence only has shown a noticeable deviation from normal distribution, but the deviation was minimal thus the test was used in further analysis.

A correlation between the results obtained through Coloured Progressive Matrices and results obtained using Comprehension subtest was calculated for each variable relevant to certain evaluator group. As a form of expressing the correlations between aforementioned occurrences, Pearson correlation coefficient and that of multiple correlations were used. The results obtained correspond to findings of similar researches (Heller et al., 2005; Sommer et al., 2008), which contributes to the significance of this research.

Considering the limit of significance given, it can be noticed that the coefficient of correlation in both tests is significant with verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, interpersonal, naturalistic and existential intelligences.

Pearson coefficient of correlation, tested over limit values, shows a significance of the coefficient of correlation between both test results and par-

ent evaluation, with logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, interpersonal, naturalistic and existential intelligence.

**Table 5.** Correlation between standardised test results and teachers' evaluation

Teachers' Evaluations	CPM		Subtest	Comprehen- sion
	r	p	r	p
Verbal-linguistic	0.16	.023	0.26	.003
Logical-mathematical	0.25	.002	0.25	.006
Visual-spatial	0.25	.007	0.25	.007
Bodily-kinaesthetic	0.10	.126	0.21	.012
Musical-rhythmic	0.14	.096	0.18	.019
Interpersonal	0.24	.009	0.24	.009
Intrapersonal	0.15	.086	0.20	.016
Naturalistic	0.20	.016	0.20	.016
Spiritual-philosophic	0.19	.017	0.19	.017

r – Pearson Coefficient of Correlation, Significance -  $p < .05$

**Table 6.** Correlation between standardised test results and parents' evaluation

Parents' Evaluations	CPM		Subtest	Comprehen- sion
	r	p	r	p
Verbal-linguistic	0.13	.097	0.25	.007
Logical-mathematical	0.22	.009	0.25	.009
Visual-spatial	0.18	.019	0.20	.015
Bodily-kinaesthetic	0.10	.134	0.20	.014
Musical-rhythmic	0.14	.091	0.19	.015
Interpersonal	0.16	.023	0.21	.023
Intrapersonal	0.13	.098	0.23	.008
Naturalistic	0.18	.019	0.19	.019
Spiritual-philosophic	0.20	.013	0.20	.013

r – Pearson Coefficient of Correlation, Significance -  $p < .05$

The information provided in the table above demonstrates a statistical significance of the coefficient of correlation between both tests and coevals' evaluation, with logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal, naturalistic and existential intelligence.

**Table 7.** Correlation between standardised test results and coevals' evaluation

Coevals' Evaluation	CPM		Subtest	Comprehen-
	r	p	sion	p
Verbal-linguistic	0.14	.096	0.24	.009
Logical-mathematical	0.18	.019	0.25	.006
Visual-spatial	0.17	.026	0.20	.016
Bodily-kinaesthetic	0.19	.017	0.22	.011
Musical-rhythmic	0.12	.107	0.22	.010
Interpersonal	0.16	.051	0.26	.005
Intrapersonal	0.15	.069	0.25	.006
Naturalistic	0.25	.006	0.22	.010
Spiritual-philosophic	0.21	.011	0.22	.011

r – Pearson Coefficient of Correlation, Significance -  $p < .05$

**Table 8.** Correlation between standardised test results and self-evaluation

Self-Evaluation	CPM		Subtest	Comprehen-
	r	p	sion	p
Verbal-linguistic	0.20	.015	0.30	.000
Logical-mathematical	0.20	.014	0.27	.000
Visual-spatial	0.22	.010	0.24	.009
Bodily-kinaesthetic	0.23	.009	0.21	.012
Musical-rhythmic	0.12	.106	0.22	.011
Interpersonal	0.20	.016	0.24	.010
Intrapersonal	0.20	.016	0.25	.005
Naturalistic	0.26	.005	0.23	.010
Spiritual-philosophic	0.20	.011	0.24	.006

r – Pearson Coefficient of Correlation, Significance -  $p < 0.05$

Pearson coefficient of correlation, tested over limit values, shows a significance of the coefficient of correlation between both test results and all of the self-evaluations, with the exception of self-evaluation of musical-rhythmic intelligence compared to PMB.

To establish a correlation between overall evaluations done by each evaluator group separately, and standardised test results, a coefficient of multiple correlation was calculated.

**Table 9.** Multiple correlations

Evaluations	CPM		Subtest	Comprehen-
	R	p	sion	sion
Teachers	0.20	0.01	R	p
Parents	0.16	0.04	0.22	.011
Coevals	0.16	0.04	0.20	.016
Students	0.18	0.02	0.20	.013
			0.23	.009

R – Multiple Coefficients of Correlation, Significance -  $p < 0.05$

The results demonstrate low but significant coefficients of interconnection between overall results obtained by all of the evaluator groups and standardised tests. Results obtained through Comprehension subtest are correlated with all evaluator group evaluations, to a higher extent.

### **Discussion**

For the purpose of overall improvement of the identification system, it was necessary to explore and define the instruments. According to Heller et al. (2005), the coefficient between teachers' evaluations and standard psychometric test results usually varies from .30 to .50. Wild (1991) finds a high-level correlation between teachers' evaluations and intelligence test results, ranging from .40 to .70. Schiefer (2004) research findings also show a high correlation between evaluation of students' intellectual abilities, done by teachers, and results achieved at intelligence test .44 and by parents .42.

Correlation analysis made in this research shows that the results obtained bear a statistical significance in most individual cases, although the correlation coefficients are low. Low, but positive interconnection had been expected, since the CPM (Coloured Progressive Matrices) measure general intellectual capabilities, and Comprehension subtest measures the assessment and use of previous experience and reasoning, rather than other abilities included in Gardner theory of intelligence. The image of the relationship between evaluations and standardised test results, obtained as such, contributes to this fact,

and the requirement that the identification of gifted students should not in any way be approached from one dimension only.

In addition to the items of abilities and high achievements, the evaluations also included questions relevant to other aspects of personality, such as motivation and inheritance. Since this is about young students, these two very factors listed herein will have an essential role in future transforming the potential into quantifiable competencies and talents. It had also been expected to obtain highest-level correlation between standardised test results and evaluations, with logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, naturalistic and existential intelligence, since the description of given abilities contains largest number of elements which overlap with those of general intellectual capability. Thus, this research resulted in statistically significant positive correlation, with all of the four evaluator groups, among evaluations given in above listed intelligence types for both tests (Tables 5 - 8). None of the evaluations of musical-rhythmic intelligence showed a correlation with PMB results, whereas evaluations of bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, done by coevals and students, have considerably correlated to the CPM results. Although a significant correlation was not found, the possibility of using the instruments for evaluation of musical-rhythmic and bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence should not be disregarded, since many other researches had shown similar results.

Correlations between Comprehension subtest results and given evaluations are statistically significant with all of the evaluators and variables. Highest level of correlation between evaluations and Comprehension subtest results has been found with self-evaluation of verbal-linguistic intelligence (Table 8). A clear connection between the type of test and intelligence evaluated is noticeable here. Evaluations of verbal-linguistic intelligence done by teachers and parents, compared to the rest of their evaluations, correlated with the Comprehension subtest to the highest extent.

Bearing in mind previous findings on abilities as the key element of giftedness, the fact that general intellectual and specific cognitive abilities rep-

resent most significant predictors of success in academic domains, is not unexpected (Benbow & Arjmand, 1990; Trost, 2000; Parkerson et al., 1984), whereas a success in artistic domains has been proven possible in the absence of above average values of global intelligence coefficient, because of what it is most reliably predicted based upon specific cognitive abilities (Trost, 2000; Pekić, 2008). The most efficient solution would be to have the same sample tested as to musical abilities, applying the test which is used at enrolling students in primary music school, Gordon tests of elementary music audiation, Bentley test of musical ability, as well as the testing with an instrument battery for assessment of motoric abilities; then to establish a correlation thereof with the evaluations.

Findings obtained can be interpreted from many angles. A critical approach of the evaluator to individual student abilities can be discussed, or relatively poor understanding of individual evaluation indicators; and the cause thereto can be sought in the structure of standardised tests as well, which do not cover all of the ability aspects defined in Gardner multiple intelligence theory.

Teachers most frequently base their evaluation of various students' abilities on their success achieved in certain subjects, as well as on a comparison of results achieved within a class. Data obtained from teachers are not necessarily reliable, since they can have different opinions on behaviour of gifted students, but these represent valuable elements for multidimensional approach to identifying gifted students.

The advantage of parents' assessment is in the fact that no one else has more information about the child, and that they can observe their child continuously and notice its behaviour and achievements in various situations. However, the information provided by parents should be considered with caution, since they are frequently unable to be objective. One-sided directionality and positive biases in the assessment of abilities, along with completely subconscious prejudices, result in a distorted picture present at evaluation of abilities

of their own child (Simeunović & Milić, 2013). While evaluating talents of their own children, parents have no possibility to compare their achievements to those of other children (Sommer et al., 2008).

All of the researches show the necessity of appropriately combining the methods of talent evaluation in school conditions, with the need of relying on students' self-evaluation in addition to parents' and teachers' evaluation.

Although self-evaluation depends on various factors, such as character, emotions, relationship with social environment, it enables gifted students to evaluate their own abilities, knowledge, skills and habits, as well as to take responsibility over learning process, and gives signals to teachers and parents that they need to react.

Lubart (1994) points out possible mistakes pertaining to self-evaluation, emphasising that persons can be either too modest or boastful in such evaluation; they can forget to mention certain achievements or refuse to consider them creative, while others would describe them as such.

Considering the time which students of one class spend together, and the fact that they constantly compare results of their work with those of other students, gifted children's coevals can provide the information as to who solves difficult assignments most easily and quickly, who comes up with MANY new ideas, who tells nicest stories, who invents best games, who always wins, who draws best, or paints, or makes models, who tells jokes most, and who they want to be friends with. Schools seldom conduct expert testing to establish students' real affinities and focuses of individual forms of giftedness, for mere fact that the testing procedure is very costly and uneconomic, and also time-consuming. High testing costs make people reluctant to this procedure, thus most gifted and creative students pass through their educational period unnoticed. Therefore, the evaluation process is of exceptional significance as to recognising students' abilities.

## **Conclusions**

Considering the results of multiple correlation coefficients obtained, a statistically significant connection can be confirmed, which had been expected since this is about the same area of variables. The findings of highest-level correlation between CPM results and evaluations with logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, naturalistic and existential intelligence had also been expected, since the description of given abilities contains the largest number of elements which overlap with those of general intellectual ability. Thus, this research resulted in a statistically significant positive correlation between CPM results and evaluations of aforementioned types of intelligence, done by all of the four evaluator groups. Highest values of correlation between evaluations of individual variables and CPM were found with students' self-evaluation, then teachers' and coevals', and the lowest with parents' evaluations.

Correlations of Comprehension subtest results with the evaluations are statistically significant with all of the evaluators and variables. Highest correlation between evaluations and Comprehension subtest results was found with self-evaluation of verbal-linguistic intelligence. Clear connection between the type of test and intelligence evaluated is noticeable here. Evaluations of verbal-linguistic intelligence, done by teachers and parents, out of all their evaluations, correlated to the Comprehension subtest to the highest extent. Based upon the results obtained, it has been confirmed that the instruments created could be used successfully in detecting the ability.

Justification for creating such instruments lies in dramatic changes occurred in social-economic development, which has initiated consideration of the key role of school and education in it, with the emphasis on significance of identifying and developing the gifted, i.e. individuals who initiate social changes and generate most progressive ideas resulting in new, original and more modern products of human culture.

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