

# THE INCIDENCE OF EDUCATION ON MENTAL DEVELOPMENT. THE CULTURAL IMPRINT ON THE CONCEPT OF "SOCIAL SUCCESS"

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**Abstract:** *The concept of "social success" is approached differently depending on the cultural imprint. In different socio – economic contexts, the academic targets, the concepts of desire, professional fulfilment, setting, timing, effort limits, and investment in the world and life perspective are marked by the shift of role models in the family environment, as well as the formal and informal educational environment.*

*This paper refers to the activation of the competitive potential of adolescents, sketching a group profile of young people from Romanian academic environment. The central dimensions are: self-esteem, saturation with parental models and family micro-group, inner tension related to insecure self-perception, as well as high standards related to insufficient stability to failure.*

**Keywords:** *academic achievement, family, role models shift, culture, enlightenment, education.*

## Defining fundamental aspects

"Few people have the notion firmly fixed on what is called a man," said B. Pascal. To know ourselves in order to maintain an internal and external balance and to define our strengths and weaknesses to find the path towards improvement. The teenager of today can be considered more intellectual than the scholar of yesteryear. We must not confuse the capacity of acquiring knowledge with the success of creating it, meaning the information with the creation.

• **Gifted children have a different way of perceiving, which can lead to isolation**

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One of the most common experiences of the gifted children is a unique way of perceiving. They make more abstract connections; they easily synthesize various experiences and reach sophisticated conclusions, from an early age. Their perceptions are not always "true", but they are strong.<sup>1</sup> The result is that these children grow up with a somewhat different reality from that of their colleagues and, often, different from that of their parents and teachers. They feel different and this can lead to isolation. But, isolation can also be an advantage: it gives them the opportunity to nurture their own gifts, to focus as intensely as they want (and need) in order to excel. So, "alone time" should not be eliminated, but balanced. The programs dedicated to gifted children are also an opportunity to meet other gifted children with whom they can communicate more easily.

- **Gifted children are often characterized as having "poor social skills"**

The isolation, the excessive parental attention and their strong intellectual capabilities can lead to lesser need for developing emotional intelligence, at a lower level of empathy and an unrealistic perception of their communication with the others (Trifu, Anita, & Chraif, 2010). No matter how brilliant they are, people are still social beings who need loving relationships with other persons. Moreover, social skills and emotional development contribute to academic development - it should not be seen as a "distraction".

- **The virtue / vice of perfectionism**

Gifted children are usually perfectionists. On the one hand, perfectionism motivates them to have good results; they get pleasure and positive feedback from the achievements. On the other hand, they are unforgiving of themselves and they find it difficult to learn from mistakes. Perfectionism may contribute to beliefs, feelings and pessimistic actions. They need to cultivate an optimistic outlook, in which the failure is temporary, isolated and can be transformed through persistent effort.

- **The burden of becoming an engine of social change**

There is a common feeling among gifted children, namely that they have the responsibility to "live up to their full potential". Perhaps because, in many ways, it is absolutely true. But, true or not, it leads to a special feeling of load. This uniqueness is neither "good" nor "bad", but it clearly generates unusual emotional needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Jigău, M., *Gifted Children*, Bucharest, Scientific and technical Publishing House, 1994.

## Objective

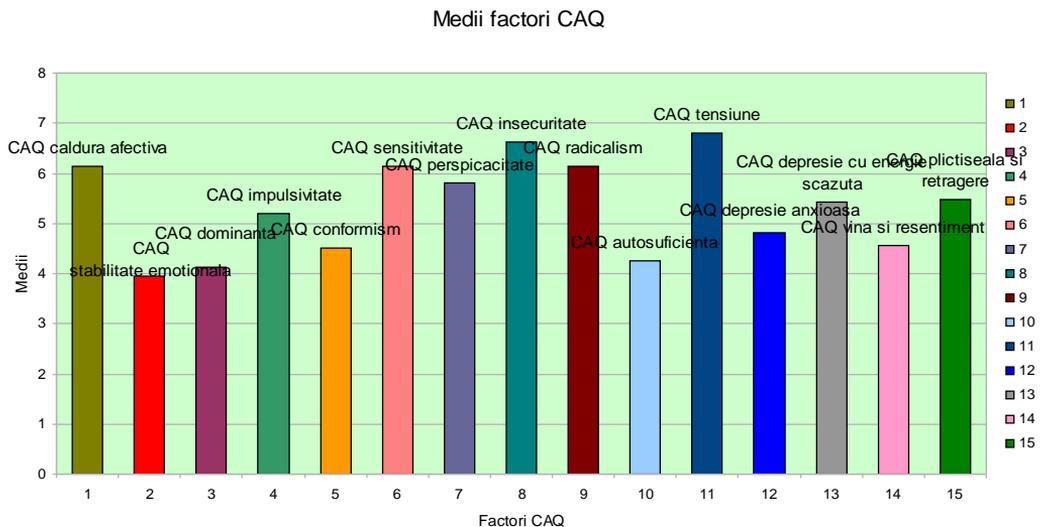
The current study aims at highlighting the important aspects and the personality structure of high performing students, on a group composed of 30 subjects, adolescents who attend the National Computer Science High School "Tudor Vianu", Bucharest, in the classes belonging to the science field profile (mathematics, computer science, physics, chemistry).

## The instrument used was:

- The Multiphase Personality Inventory CAQ of Samuel Krug (standardized and validated for the Romanian population, including the standard for adolescents) (Krug, 2000)

## Research results:

In the following chart we present the averages of the 30 adolescents in the 3 psychodiagnostic instruments selected, averages for each one of them, as well as the overall average for each instrument.



As it is visible from the chart above, the averages of five of the CAQ factors (Krug, 2000) - **affective warmth**, **sensitivity**, **insecurity**, **radicalism** and **tension** slightly - slightly towards moderate surpass the average of the general population, the last factor surpassing significantly the average of the general population, while emotional stability factor has values below the average of the general population, confirming the sometimes reduced resources of these subjects of coping to high performance

demands under stress conditions. Also, the stress scores below the average of the general population can be noticed in the factors CAQ dominance and CAQ self-sufficiency, in conflict with CAQ perspicacity, CAQ radicalism, CAQ boredom and withdrawal and CAQ anxious depression that have obtained average scores and scores above the average.

- As it is clear from the above data, a group of five CAQ factors that have averages slightly higher than the average of the general population also differ significantly in most parts from the results obtained by the adolescents in the other CAQ factors taken into consideration. Although the CAQ **tension** and CAQ **insecurity** factors do not differ significantly in-between them, they differ significantly from all the other CAQ factors, which places them as *characteristic factors of the CAQ profile of the high performing adolescent within the analyzed population*. Based on these results we can hypothesize that the profile of the high performing adolescent done based on the CAQ questionnaire has the following factors as central points: **tension, insecurity, emotional warmth, sensitivity and radicalism**. At the other end of the spectrum, below the average of the general population, are situated the *CAQ emotional stability, CAQ dominance and CAQ self-sufficiency* factors, precisely those factors that refer to the coping ability, expressing feelings, including the hostile ones and individual work.

- Respectively, these adolescents who tend to be more anxious and frustrated, with an absolute need for other people's approval, also preoccupied with feelings of guilt, insecure and dependent and yet who manage to be innovative, they lack precisely those elements of counter-balance, meaning a better capacity to cope with stressful situations, a greater ability to express hostile feelings without fear of being rejected by others and without feeling guilt and a dose of independence in what they do. These adolescents seem to have much more need of confirmation from the others than the average population; they have little confidence in themselves and tend to give up their own desires to please the others.

- This profile corresponds mainly to adolescents who are unable to externalize stress, which results in discharging the tension within their own body.

- We can hypothesise that adolescents who come to develop elements of psychopathology present a basal fragility within the area of tension and anxiety management, emotional self expressing ability, this fragility representing the fertile ground on which, subsequently, by associating

other factors, such as constitutional, social, economic, physical, etc. factors, psychological disorders may manifest.

**Analysis of the results regarding the area of the *Performance* concept:**

\*The family climate and motivational interaction is important in the intergenerational connection.

\* The trigger elements involved in activating the competitive dynamic must always be identified.

\*The motivation / desire / ergic involvement ratio differs between the levels of conscious and unconscious.

\* The emotional development, the attitudinal - relational development and the moral development depend on the development in the functional cognitive area.

\*For high performing children, the operations of sequencing, planning, control, analysis *versus* synthesis can be done from concrete to abstract, from particular to general **and mutually**.

\* The biological potential - temperamental potential - motivational potential interaction gains new facets in the Heredity - Environment - Education triad.

\* The learning processes are accelerated.

\*The concepts of standards, targets, limits acquire new approaches.

\* The ratio empirical teaching / formative learning gets amended, as well as the one between the *intuitive / symbolic / rational*.

\* The identification with the parent hypothesis, as well as the mirror image hypothesis are both equally valid.

\* The dimension of the isolation, asceticism and introversion is possibly found in cases of failure out of the performance matrix.

\* Adolescence may be the age of onset of the pathology of generalized anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder or panic disorder.

\* In children there is masked depression that is often associated with *irritability* issues.

\* The age of 12 allows the failure of a Borderline structuring type.

\*Regarding the psychotic pathology, the question referring to the relationship with a high academic potential remains - *truth* or *trap*?

\* The theory of hypersystematization/hypoempathy is valid for gifted children.

\* Motivational dynamics throughout life is continuously changing, although it maintains the key impact of the first motivation in choosing a profession.

\* The potential of a teacher to project in the future the image of an adolescent through the concepts of *reverse connexion / projective identification* in role is important.

\* To place everything in the concept of "high performance" means the *total* libidinal investment theory, with reference to the modern vision of the term "addiction" (similarity with the theory of the psychotic core in anorexia disorder, dysmorphic body disorder, the new category in the DSM V of "being in love")<sup>2</sup>

\* There are significant differences between the high performing students whose parents are former olympiad contest winners and students for whom high performance is their own challenge.

\* There has been a hypothesis that, in some schools, where students are selected according to certain criteria, their group profile is more balanced.

\* There are differences between: general intelligence - special intelligence - "training" - the degree of culture. The ratio between "**intelligence**" and "**work**" is different from the concept of "**high performance**" from a student to another.

\* Both the following implications are true: increasing self-esteem increases performance, increasing performance increases self-esteem. Consequently, the Schultz autogenic training may be an option in the psychological preparation of high performing students.

\* A too greater or improper involvement of the parents in the relationship with the teachers leads to falsifying the child's image consistent with falsifying the child's image from the parent's mind.

\* The ratio between "memory"/acquiring of knowledge and creativity is particular to each age, but also to every child, even in the performance area.

\*Regarding the children whose parents project a *perfect* and *ideal* image, possible variants of development of the trauma caused at contact with reality would be: depression/development or the parasite/development of the aggressive side/ normal structure.

\* Halfway on the high performance road there should be a judicious possibility of self-analysis for the child in what regards their own performance; TO KNOW THAT YOU DON'T KNOW thus becomes a key concept.

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<sup>2</sup> Sadock, B.J., *Kaplan and Sadock Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*. Lippincott Williams Wilkins, 2009.

\* Another milestone moment is the development of the child's ability to enjoy his work (inner feeling of spiritual completeness).

### **Expectations**

The homogeneity of interests favours cooperation. Its structure, entirety of roles and set of norms and rules regulating the conduct in the given circumstances are important. Interpersonal affection offers safety and enthusiasm.

The essential role of the teacher is to train, to mobilize the student in a favourable manner for action, to involve him emotionally. Taste, affection, ambition, desire to achieve have a particular importance: these are the ones inciting the formation, transformation, self-education, development of a certain quality or moderating another one. "As iron cannot be worked until it is heated, nor human souls cannot be grown without feeling" (N. Iorga). The teacher must be the fervent and ardent apostle that would infect his students with enthusiasm and heading them the right way. As for the rest, they will go on the road of knowledge only being supervised. Self-confidence, optimism led even to fanaticism must be cultivated. Perpetuating the dreams of youth represents the continuously searching generator of the dedicated teacher. In the recent paper<sup>3</sup> "The education in the show", the academician Marcus Solomon says: "I bow with respect and tenderness in the face of those teachers and professors who live the emotion and excitement of the beginning of the school year and who, despite the repetitive nature of the academic exercise, do not give in to the rut and surfeit".

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