Favouring of Gifted Pupils by Elementary Teachers: A Labelling Theory Perspective

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Abstract

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Favouring of Gifted Pupils by Elementary Teachers: A Labelling Theory Perspective

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Improving the quality of care for gifted pupils also brings problems related to their favouring. Favouring, as a part of the labeling theory, leads to the selection of gifted and stagnation in their development, making it one of the risk factors. This study identifies and analyses pedagogical situations leading to favouring of gifted pupils. The qualitative research is conducted in the elementary schools in the Czech Republic (Central Europe). Data are obtained through observation of school lessons and from interviews with teachers and were subsequently analysed by the situational analysis. The study has found five typical situations, such as teachers' increased expectations of gifted pupils, privileges only for gifted pupils, gifted pupil as the teacher's assistant, additional tasks only for gifted pupils, and gifted pupil as the captain of group work. We also detect typical features leading to favouring as a privilege, representation, performance, segregation, lack of purpose, and rigidity. The study draws attention to the existence of high-quality formalized care for the gifted (anchoring care in school legislation), for which school practice is not sufficiently prepared.

Keywords: gifted pupil, favouring, labeling theory, situations leading to favouring, situational analysis

The support of education for the gifted pupils evokes the need to analyze the benefits of applied educational programs. However, this support is also connected with negative consequences, which are overlooked in theory and practice. These problems relate to the inconsiderate treatment of the "gifted" label, which leads to the exclusion of gifted pupils and the non-respecting of the educational needs of (not only) gifted pupils. The careless treatment with this label is associated with generally accepted projections, which can create attitudes on a scale from supporting favouring to denying care for the gifted (Delisle, 2001; Gagné, 2018). We perceive the favouring as a part of the labeling theory, within which we will try to anchor the concept.

The research occurs in the environment of ordinary, non-selective state elementary schools, where there is also an exceptionally intellectually gifted pupil (aged six to thirteen) in the performance-heterogeneous school team. It aims to uncover whether and how the pedagogical situations could be found, leading to gifted pupils´ favouring. It primarily focuses on teachers as architects of favouring and the educational strategies they use in teaching as a means of conditioning favouring.

The study tries to draw attention to the existence of high-quality formalized care for the gifted (i.e., anchoring care in school legislation, identification of giftedness in counseling facilities, education within "supportive measures," see below), for which school practice is not sufficiently prepared. This is mainly due to the absence of didactic competence of teachers to apply constructivist educational methods and engage in functional internal differentiation and formative assessment. The increasing formalized care for the gifted then places very high

demands on teachers to report the support for the gifted, which often leads to unconscious favouring of gifted pupils.

Defining Giftedness

Giftedness is defined as a social construct reflecting an idea of exceptionally high abilities being demonstrated within a society (Lo et al., 2019). Children who fit the accepted descriptions are most likely to be recognised as gifted and subsequently provided for (Freeman, 2013). Although the concepts of giftedness are vague, they substantially influence the development of "gifted" individuals. At the same time, this situation gives rise to the creation of labels, many of which do not even match the gifted individual.

In this study, giftedness refers to the traditional definitions (Dai, 2009), that is, giftedness covers less than 2% of cases; cognitive skills prevalence is primarily present in identifying giftedness; giftedness is already manifested; gifted pupils differ in degree of giftedness; etc. The "gifted pupil" is someone who successfully undergo a comprehensive diagnosis of intellectual giftedness in the Education Counselling Services (NUV, 2016), which is responsible for formal diagnosis of giftedness in the Czech Republic. Based on the results, the diagnosed pupil was included in one of four levels of "supportive measures" in school education which defined the depth and form of differentiation and individualization in education (MŠMT, 2016). The pupils studied according to the Individualized Education Plan or another study contract. Based on data from the Czech School Inspectorate (CSI, 2019), 0.1% of the pupils in the Czech Republic were identified and defined as so "gifted." This is a very narrowly and conservatively defined group of exceptionally intellectually gifted pupils whose identification and education were explicitly grasped, formalized, and compulsorily reported in the Czech Republic. It is the features of the above-defined group that may predispose gifted pupils to a greater risk of labelling and favouring than would be the case for other gifted pupils conforming to modern, more liberal definitions of giftedness (Dai, 2009).

Labelling of Gifted Pupils and the Favouring

Labelling theory posits that social groups and institutions develop unspoken rules regarding the negative characteristics that some individuals possess and therefore become stigmatized (Becker, 1973, Frieh, 2019, Matsueda, 2014). After receiving the label, the individual is separated from the original social group and forced into individual or collective segregation within an alternative social group. Such segregation strengthens the label, leading to the internalization of the attribute (Kolb & Jussim, 1994).

According to Goffman (1986), a label can be essentially any attribute that is in itself neutral. Whether a given attribute will cause a discriminating stigma, be perceived as neutral, or as a symbol of prestige is decided by the social context of the situation. The favouring could contribute to the labeling process of an individual (Kaushik et al., 2016). The favouring (or favouring/favouritism, in the context of education) is an attitude in which the teacher supports or prefers some pupils before others (Lindner et al., 2023; Hughes, 2021). The person (pupil) is not favourable because he/she is doing "the best job" but rather because of some extraneous feature-membership in a favoured group (Perryer & Scott-Ladd, 2014).

Additionally, the gifted pupils as a specific group can be threatened by favouring (Casino-García et al., 2019; Cross et al., 2013; Delisle, 2001; Freeman, 2013; Sarouphim, 2011; Zeidner, 2021). The problem of favouring is related to how society treats the concept of giftedness. Freeman (2005) claims that the term "gifted" comes with a certain set of connotations. If we choose only the connotations related to favouring, these are statements describing the origin and identification of the gifted (e.g., giftedness is hereditary and self-

evident), the personality of gifted children and their families (e.g., the gifted show strong personality traits and have exceptional cognitive skills; they come from privileged families), and their education and future life (e.g., they need extra attention; they will be the nation's elite; they will save us; Portešová et al., 2014).

The implications of the favouring can be revealed in studies comparing two groups of gifted pupils, that is, those who do or do not participate in a special educational program for the gifted (Cross et al., 2013; Meadows & Neumann, 2017; Zeidner, 2021), or in studies that describe the experiences of gifted pupils from these programs (Clark, 2013; Freeman, 2005; Freeman, 2013; Gates, 2010; Matthews, et al., 2014; Sarouphim, 2011). The negative aspects include, for example, a stereotypical evaluation of a gifted child's personality, changes to their self-confidence and self-evaluation, fear of academic failure, pressure and higher expectations of teachers and parents that do not correspond with the child's level of giftedness, exclusion from the group, bullying, and so on. Positive aspects are, for example, the availability of various educational tools, a more intensive individual approach towards the child, interaction with other gifted children, etc.

The threat produced by favouring is the exclusion of the pupil from the group of peers, which, according to models of giftedness such as the Multifactor model of giftedness by F. Mönks or Tannenbaum's "Sea Star" model of giftedness (Davidson, 2009), is a key barrier to the development of giftedness. Furthermore, favouring leads to disregard for the needs of other pupils in the class (at the expense of gifted pupils) and is widely considered unethical (Tirri & Laine, 2017).

Practical guides for teachers point out inappropriate educational strategies leading to ethical problems with gifted pupils. For example, Freeman (2005) describes dysfunctional forms of gifted individuals' selection. VanTassel-Baska (1992) and the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2016) refer to a pedagogical strategy in which the gifted are over-assigned to the role of tutor. Robinson (1990) considers inappropriate competitive activities in inclusive settings. However, the mentioned pedagogical strategies lack thorough anchoring in basic or applied research and conceptual linking to the favouring within the labeling theory.

We conducted research in elementary schools (with a heterogeneous collective) where "gifted pupils" are also educated. We applied observations of school lessons and interviews with teachers in order to deeper insight to the topic. We defined the following research questions:

- Which pedagogical situations lead to favouring the gifted pupils?
- What are the typical features of pedagogical situations leading to favouring?

We decided to realize a qualitative research design using the situational analysis method (Clarke, 2005, 2014). The situational analysis, as an applied research approach, is one of the applied analytical approaches of the second generation of the established theory. It is based on the positivist grounded theory and the fact that human behaviour and actions cannot be examined in a reduced way but as part of a wider social world or a social situation which becomes the centre of the research. In accordance with Clarke (2005), when analysing the data, we first subjected the transcribed material to the open encoding that we complemented with notes, which made it possible to identify the key elements of the pedagogical situations leading to favouring the gifted pupils. On the basis of the identified elements, we created a messy map (see Figure 1) where we subsequently sorted out their 40 codes into sub-categories of relational analysis. Another analytical step was an ordered map (see Figure 2) focused on summarizing the problem of favouring.

Method

The main aim of the study is to identify and analyse pedagogical situations leading to the favouring of gifted pupils. The partial aims are

- To identify and define the pedagogical situations leading to favouring the gifted pupils
- To describe the typical features of pedagogical situations leading to favouring the gifted pupils

We primarily focus on teachers as a possible architect of the favouring and educational strategies they use in teaching to condition favouring. The study was conducted in elementary schools in the Czech Republic.

Participants and their Recruitment

The participants were teachers, gifted pupils and classmates (pupils with no-diagnosed intellectual giftedness), that is, all members of the school classes where the pedagogical situations leading to the favouring of gifted pupils were applied.

The research was conducted with elementary schools, where there is at least one "gifted pupil" in the heterogeneous class of pupils, what was the main precondition of the sampling (teachers and pupils). These schools were searched through an analysis of school websites or the "Gifted children" Facebook group, where information on the existence of such gifted pupils is commonly found. We used the convenience sampling (transport accessibility of the school; schools that agreed to our research) and purposeful sampling (i.e., schools with gifted pupils) of primary schools (Gentles et al., 2015).

The headteachers of all schools we contacted agreed to carry out the research. All cooperating teachers were informed at all stages of the research that they were participants in the research. Information for participants in the research investigation and consent forms for the processing of personal data were given to all participants. The observation of teaching had the character of a common inspection activity, which did not require the consent of the pupils' parents. The research methodology was approved by the Ethics Committee of Thomas Bata University in Zlin.

The sample of the study were 15 teachers (only woman - available sampling). Subjects were 24 "gifted pupils" (18 boys and six girls) in the age from six to 14 educated at ten elementary schools (city schools from the region Prague and Moravia of the Czech Republic). The school's class size ranges from 16 to 31 students, with up to three pupils classified as gifted. The research subjects were also gifted pupils' classmates (numbers were not tracked).

Materials

The primary source of data was the observation of pedagogical situations leading to favouring in the school lessons and their specification with teachers after lessons using interviews. This situation occurs during school lessons, intervening the "favouring."

The secondary source included interviews with teachers which were conducted in order to provide the individual context of the situations. The research was conducted with the approval of the Ethical Committee of Tomas Bata University in Zlin.

Role of Researchers

In qualitative research, the researcher often becomes a part of the investigated reality, which he/she can (even unconsciously) influence (Thurairajah, 2019). Our research team consists of three researchers, the author of the study (academic) and two consultants from the practice of the elementary school. They view the topic exclusively from the point of view of pedagogy and their professional and personal experiences. All researchers are women, graduates of the field of pedagogy, while professionally profiled themselves in giftedness. The author of the study collected and analyzed most of the data. Consultants participated mainly in the analysis and commenting on the data. Their role consisted of enriching data with additional perspectives on the investigated reality.

Data Collection and Analysis

The process of data collection and analysis took place in three consecutive phases:

Pre-Identification of Pedagogical Situations Leading to Favouring

The initial activity took place in the form of observation in school lessons. We focused on academic subjects (not non-academic subjects such as physical education, music, or art), where the support for giftedness was based on internal differentiation (the gifted pupil was not moved to another school class or place).

When identifying the situations, we asked ourselves the following questions related to favouring according to the theoretical background:

- Is the gifted privileged or prominently highlighted?
- Is the gifted over-selected, and is this selection effective?
- Are some pupils undervalued because of favouring gifted pupils?
- Is it "all things to all pupils"?
- Do gifted pupils or their classmates exhibit specific traits that may imply favouring?

We identified all observable phenomena in teaching, such as the pupils' verbal expressions or the teacher's application of educational strategies (task instructions, notes on the board, type of grouping of pupils, material didactic resources used by the teacher, objectives of the lesson, educational methods and strategies, pupils' assessment, pupils' activity, etc.). There was no protocol with predefined categories for the observation. The researcher thus reacted to the unpredictable "life" in the school classroom.

We found pedagogical situations leading to favouring in almost every lesson. In some lessons we identified only the consequences of situations (brief comments of pupils or teachers) with very short paper and pencil notes kept by the researcher; in other lessons, we discovered a number of situations that were described on several sheets of paper (see examples in described situations within the study's findings).

Using the "paper-pencil" notation, we transcribed various expressions of favouring that could be part of pedagogical situations leading to favouring. Immediately after the school lessons, we sent the teachers a request for comments on our notes. We presented them the identified situation in a very sensitive way, that is, without any indication of our attitude towards the situation as "bad or good." Here, interviews were conducted in order to specify the broader context of sub-situations from the teacher's point of view. The questions for the interviews with the teachers were highly individualized in relation to the type of situation we identified in their teaching. To define the general topics of the interviews, we were interested

in the motive for using the situation (Why do they use them?), what preceded the situation, how the situation would develop in the future (What are the teacher's plans for follow-up activities? Does the situation have some deeper pedagogical intent?) and how often the strategy was used. It was usually a short dialogue lasting about ten to 20 minutes.

Identification of Pedagogical Situations Leading to Favouring

The initial version of identified situations was further discussed with colleagues (see role of researchers) in three meetings. There were discussions on whether to include each situation among the favouring. We again asked the questions related to favouring (Was the gifted privileged or prominently highlighted? Was the gifted over-selected, and was this selection effective? Were some pupils undervalued because of favouring gifted pupils? Was it "all things to all pupils"?; etc.) but in the broader context of data and rich points of view of three researchers. During discussion, we also find some missing data which were needed for another specification of the context. If the schools allowed it, the researchers kept coming back to collect these data. In total, we watched almost 60 lessons led by 15 teachers.

Final Analysis of Pedagogical Situations Leading to Favouring by Situation Analysis

In the last phase, the situations were analyzed in relation to the situation analysis. According to Clarke (2014), the basic unit of analysis is the situation. It is not one specific phenomenon, but the entire situation that includes and co-shapes the phenomenon. In our research, this means that we do not limit ourselves to favouring (e.g., data collection through interviews with teachers focused exclusively on favoring). In the research, we cover all participants of the school lesson (teachers and pupils), including researchers who unconsciously intervene in it to a certain extent by their presence. We monitor diverse data of various natures that together create the entire situation.

Figure 1
The messy map

The situation analysis can include several methods of analysis. In accordance with Clarke (2005), we first subjected the transcribed material to the open coding that we complemented with notes, which made it possible to identify the key elements of favouring. We found more than 70 codes, which we subsequently abstracted into almost 40 codes. After that, we created a "messy map" (Clarke, 2005; see Figure 1) to pre-identify variables and relations between them and in order to create the ordered map.

The "ordered map" (Figure 2) highlights areas of increased interest (Clarke, 2005). In the first column of the map (Figure 2) are the main categories - pedagogical situations leading to favouring. The middle column divides the category into sub-categories (eleven sub-topics). In the last column, we try to describe the typical features of pedagogical situations leading to favouring.

Figure 2
The ordered map

teacher's increased expectations for GPs	intellectual and non-intellectual area	The teacher demonstrates favourable attitudes towards the gifted (assumption of higher performances by GPs, excusing their lower performances).
	GP as role model for others	The teacher discriminates against other pupils.
privileges only for GP	absence of transparent conditions for granting the privilege.	GPs receive privileges (rewards) from the teacher. Other pupils do not get privileges, even if the teacher says they do.
	privileges do not primarily develop giftedness.	The teacher segregates and emphasizes GPs unnecessarily.
GP as a teacher's assistant	GP in the role of organizer	The teacher places the GPs in a superior position and thereby segregates them.
	GP is giving lecture	Segregation is often pointless (no giftedness development).
	GP as teachers' supervisor	Only the GPs do the role of assistant.
additional tasks only for GP	activities primarily developing giftedness	Activities are aimed exclusively at GPs. The activities support the selection of GPs, while this selection is rather pointless.
	activities not primarily developing giftedness	
GP as captain of group work	unchanging group of pupils, with the captain	The teacher assigns GPs a privileged position such as group captains.
	mixed groups of pupils with a captain and nomination of pupils	GP is in a privileged position even if another (less efficient) pupil is assigned to the position of captain.

The "relation analysis" (Clarke, 2005) illustrates relationships between the key and marginal elements (more in section discussion). In the case of relational maps, mutual relationships between individual elements are already outlined. The relationships between them were identified through data analysis, during which the author choose the key element in the map (favouring) and then search for all relationships between this element and other elements in the data material (see Figure 3).

Findings

We specified our areas of interest in the ordered map (Figure 2), with five key topics and eleven sub-topics. We do not present entire pedagogical situations, but rather their parts. First, we describe the situation (What is the pedagogical situation about?; Why does the teacher do it?; How does the teacher do it?; What effect does it have on the pupil?) and then illustrate it by the concrete data. Specific citations relate to the gifted pupil (GP), teacher (T) or classmate (CL). At the end of each category, we briefly summarize the problem of favouring.

Teachers' Increased Expectations of Gifted Pupils

Teachers demonstrate higher expectations of gifted pupils directly before the whole class. "The difficult question of what caused death in epidemics... even our talents will try to think" (T). However, teachers expect high performance from gifted pupil. When a pupil does not perform at his or her best, the teacher demonstrates his or her surprise at this outcome and tries to justify this inadequacy in various ways. "Is it too hard for you? But we have gone over it many times. A, B, C and D (GPs) should have already handed their work in" (T). "Well Tom (GP), I expected you to be the first as always, why didn't you do well today?" (T).

Above all, higher expectations concern the pupil's learning abilities, such as speed of execution and difficulty of the learning content – "Try and be as good as K. (GP) so you catch up with her" (T); or perceptiveness – "Children, who can find the mistake? Not even P. (GP) can see it?" (T).

Teachers also expect better skills from gifted pupils not primarily related to intellectual talent. For example, physical dexterity – "Who will help me light the fire today? I think… H. (GP), you are good at things." (T), "Why Hynek again?" (CL), or better behaviour – "Look at T. (GP), how well he works and how good he is, unlike you" (T).

The teacher in question adopts this attitude in order to motivate pupils to perform better. In the interviews with teachers, manifestations of demotivation are mostly denied. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned reaction of the classmates indicates that this approach may not be beneficial. "A gifted pupil seems to be a suitable role model, one that is close and familiar to the other children and whose qualities are therefore achievable … Mainly, I want to motivate the other children like that" (T).

Privileges Only for Gifted Pupils

Within this category, the privileges are granted by the teacher solely to gifted pupils. As presented in the following example, the privileges are activities that are perceived as attractive to other pupils as well, such as participating in a discussion with an expert, computer work, reading for pleasure, playing games on a tablet, or relaxing on a beanbag.

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher praises the pupil (GP) who participated in the chemistry competition. She highlights his efforts and describes his acute fatigue, with the GP nodding in agreement. He is offered the chance to work on any chemistry assignment alone in the back of the classroom; however, the GP plays some games on the tablet. The teacher repeats the curriculum with the other pupils. Children express their disagreement with the teacher's decision. "You don't have to complain about anything, because he represented the school in the competition... If you were also so hardworking, then you can sit in those seats too" (T). "That's not fair. He has it on the school tablet" (CL). After the lesson, the children complain to each other that the school tablet cannot be used for games but only for school work.

The teacher tells the pupils about the discussion at the school for the pupils with an expert on the use of modern technologies in physics. "And why couldn't we all be there? Why just someone?" (CL).

> And you would be as interested as our gifted? According to your behavior in class, I had the feeling that you were not interested in such things at all ... so I gave the opportunity to gifted pupils who are interested and also to those who behave decently (T).

Because the privileges hold a certain attraction, in almost all the situations we observed, a strong backlash could be seen from those who were not given any. The crucial point is that

the conditions allowing for privileges are highly unclear. Pupils are not able to discern whether a reward is intended only for the gifted (acknowledging intellectual skills) or whether the others are also able to achieve them for demonstrating certain aspects of the set example (appropriate behaviour). In these cases, the teacher must immediately respond by explaining the "transparency" of the conditions for gaining a privilege. Although, by explaining this transparency, the teacher presents the opportunity to all the pupils, it is clear that an activity that is so highly praised can only be successfully performed by gifted pupils.

Gifted Pupil as the Teacher's Assistant

In other situations, a gifted pupil is favoured by becoming the teacher's assistant. Again, this role is given only to gifted pupils. As an assistant, the pupils' usual tasks concerned helping with teaching. A gifted pupil writes notes dictated by the teacher, hands out or collects teaching aids, searches for the meaning of some words, or gives advice to others when doing simple sums.

In the Czech language subject, pupils are tasked with giving examples of words and their synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms. The teacher invites the pupil (GP) to go to the board and write these words according to the classmates' dictation. Then the teacher divides the pupils into pairs.

> Now my handy helper hands out a sheet of paper with synonyms, antonyms and homonyms, and it's up to you to pair up and sort the words on the paper into columns, each pair getting a different word. So you can't describe anything from the neighbor. The only one who can give you advice is Jan (GP) or me (T).

A gifted pupil does not work on this task, but rather, checks the others.

The teacher explains the effectiveness of the strategy as a method of developing pro-social skills, although this justification may play a greater role in preventing the pupil from behaving inappropriately because of non-respect of educational needs.

> Gifted people have problems with emotional and social intelligence; these children should first develop pro-social skills to know how it works in a normal society. They should be as involved in teaching as possible, learn to help and take care of the weaker (T).

Other tasks further develop one's gift. The gifted pupil is asked to prepare a presentation on a given topic at home and present it to his/her classmates on a certain date. This task is usually planned in advance. These activities belong only to gifted pupils and are only assigned to them regularly.

> I consider individual projects and their presentations to be very beneficial for the pupil … his IEP (Individualized Education Plan) is actually based on these activities. So those who have it in the IEP, I demand it. I also have one clever girl there, so she is not as gifted, but I will give it to her sometimes (U).

In a different situation, the gifted pupil is given the role of a superior teacher's partner. He or she adds to the teacher's explanations, and the teacher turns to him/her for additional facts. In some cases, gifted pupils feel an urge to interrupt the teacher without being asked. Unlike with the other children, such behaviour is sometimes tolerated. The lack of clear rules for behaviour often gets out of hand. For example, when a gifted pupil wants to help when such

assistance is uncalled for (e.g., the pupil runs around the classroom leafing through books in order to find some information).

The teacher gives the pupils instructions on how to work in a group. They can choose certain roles (tasks). The gifted pupils do not respect the instructions. He immediately performs tasks for everyone in his group. Without permission, he runs to other groups, where he wants to solve their tasks for other pupils. The teacher provides the gifted pupil with a worksheet. Here, however, the boy discovers information that he wants to search for on the Internet, running from the computer to the books. "Honzo (name of GP), it's not possible for you to run around the class here, come clear my board" (U).

Additional Tasks Only for Gifted Pupils

Favouring of gifted pupils was detected during lessons in which teachers gave extra tasks only to them. The objective of extra tasks was to stimulate gifted pupils while they were waiting for others to complete the main activity. We have identified two basic types of additional tasks. The first group includes tasks focused on developing the pupil's intellect, although some involved lower cognitive goals. Such an approach is not suitable for a gifted pupil (e.g., to repeatedly apply knowledge in a single context).

> "I repeat, everybody is to do exercise numbers 1, 2 and 3 on page 27, P. (GP)
> will do page 28 as well … When Kamil (GP) is done, he will raise his hand and
> I will give him more examples from the textbook" (T).

The tasks in the second group we deem inadequate to develop giftedness. They are assigned exclusively to gifted pupils in order to give them "something to do."

> Zuzi (GP), a special task just for you – take your colouring pencils and colour
> in the birds … And you two will take the temperature every 5 minutes and
> record it in this table (monitoring how ice melts in a chemistry lesson) (T).

Seemingly, the classmates do not have any objections to gifted pupils being given extra work because the teacher does not present these tasks as attractive.

Gifted Pupil as Captain of Group Work

In these situations, pupils work in groups. "My aim is to have groups of equal strength, so there is always a gifted child in each group, or someone bright at least ... Group work done in this setup works well for me" (T). Gifted pupils become so-called "captains," and unlike the other children, they have extended powers granted by the teacher. For example, they propose who will be in their group, are in charge of the activities or present the results. "They will go up in front of the board … [the teacher calls all four gifted pupils by her first name]. Choose someone in your class to work on. In the end, you will present it" (T).

Because it is often necessary to have more groups in the class than there are gifted pupils, teachers allocate this role to other children as well.

> I have two gifted who have been formally recognized, then I will use two other
> ones who used to have formal certification but do not see the psychologist any
> more, and I will also put one girl there who is not gifted but she is very bright
> nevertheless (T).

Teachers do not consider it necessary to conceal the entitlement of gifted pupils. "There are children with ADHD, dyslexia, gifted. They all have documents to confirm that, the whole class is aware of who these pupils are, so there is no need to conceal it" (T).

To assemble groups, teachers use a set list of names prepared earlier to make sure there is at least one "bright" pupil in each group. The fact that teachers apply this strategy frequently is evidenced by the pupils automatically creating groups simply by turning to their colleagues, without any specific instructions.

Another strategy is to rearrange the groups but letting gifted pupils take the lead again. The usual procedure is to nominate the captains (gifted pupils) who stand in front of the class and call out names of children they want in their groups.

> One by one, you will choose who you want in your group ... You choose three children and you two choose four children each … Think hard who you want to be in your group because you will work on the project next week too (T).

Naturally, gifted pupils pick children who are popular or those who perform well. The teacher must be aware that towards the end, the process may draw unethical attention to classmates who are unpopular and unwanted in any group. Thus, the teacher seeks to apply various strategies to avert a conflict. "OK, stop for now. We have six pupils remaining and we have six groups. So, go and join the group you want, each of you must go to a different one" (T). Nevertheless, a conflict of some kind can hardly be avoided. "Not you, please choose a different group..." (CL). "Let's all stop complaining, just find somewhere to work and begin…" (T).

We also encountered situations where the role of captain was allocated to children not formally assessed as gifted (or otherwise deemed bright). These pupils were allowed to choose classmates for their groups, but further privileges were once again granted only to the gifted. Here too, we can detect favouring of gifted pupils, drawing unnecessary attention to them.

> "But Miss, it's not fair, there are only 6 of us in our group and they have 8" (CL). There are 8 in the group because they have special needs children and you have Kuba (GP), that is why there are fewer of you. Don't you think it's more unfair that you have Kuba and they don't? … Now, F. (GP) will wait until we see what the groups are like, and we will send you where it will be even (T).

We observed that the tasks assigned during group work were focused largely on swift performance. They were activities that allowed gifted pupils to succeed. Some gifted pupils assumed responsibility for the given activity, while others were completely passive in their roles as captains.

Discussion

This study focused exclusively on pedagogical situations, which lead to favouring of gifted pupils. Instances of other types of pedagogical situations were not analysed.

To present the results, we rely on relation analysis (Figure 3). We consider the category "gifted pupil as the main actor of teaching" to be the superior category, which intersects with all other topics and subtopics. In the map, we can see five other categories highlighted, which correspond to the five types of pedagogical situations mentioned above. Another series of remaining categories presents other characteristics of situations. The context of situations is placed in the corners of relational analysis, which presents the typical features of pedagogical situations leading to favouring.

Figure 3

The relationship analysis
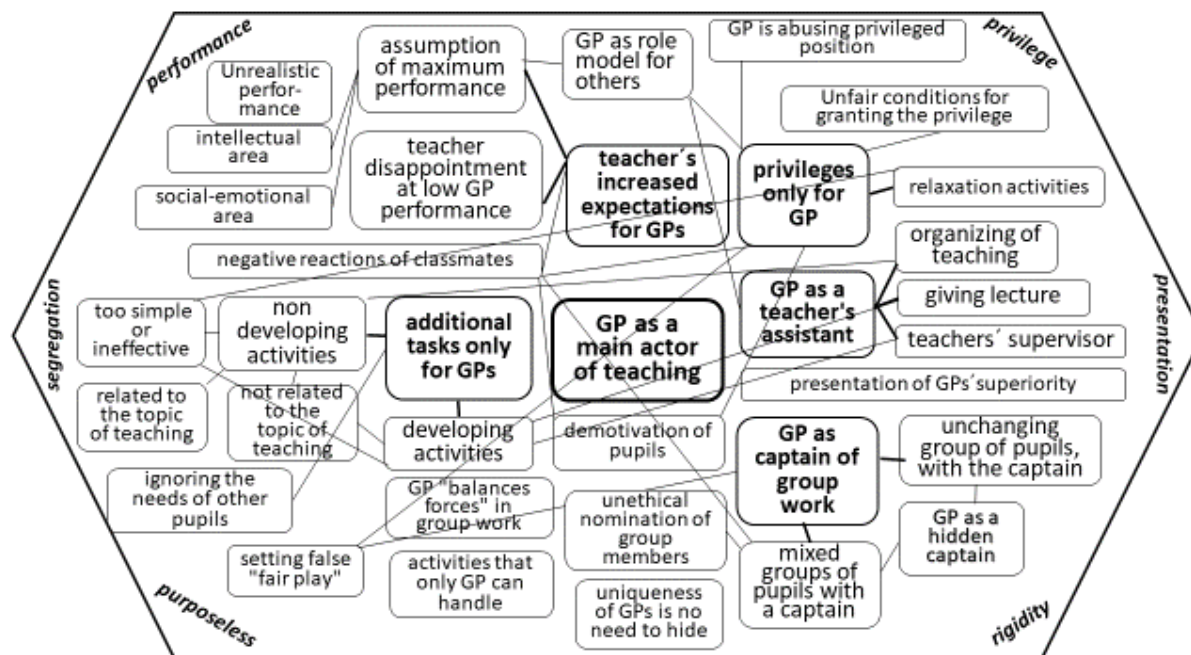
The first research aim was to identify and define the pedagogical situations leading to favouring the gifted pupils. We revealed several pedagogical situations (main categories) leading to favouring, such as teachers' increased expectations of gifted pupils, privileges only for gifted pupils, gifted pupil as the teacher's assistant, additional tasks only for gifted pupils and gifted pupil as captain of group work. The relation analysis (Figure 3) then demonstrates the relationships between categories.

Teachers offer the gifted pupil a new identity, towards which they steer them (Marsh, 2008). A teacher expects a gifted pupil to have both intellectual and non-intellectual abilities. To give maximum performance is perceived as a prerequisite, yet in most cases, the gifted pupil does not show signs of this projected identity. In reality, the gifted pupil's identity relates to the context of elitism (Pakulski, 2018). It is used as a model for other pupils in the class who are not able to achieve such ideals. The teacher uses this strategy primarily to motivate pupils. This practice may be linked to the transformational leadership theory (Lentz, 2012), where the person who has the role of a leader (a peer) serves as an example for the others, inspires team members, and challenges followers. Nevertheless, to successfully motivate pupils, the teachers lack a professional concept, resulting in the demotivation of all participants.

Teachers make their attitudes leading to favouring clear to other pupils, not only by utilising a modified curriculum but also through ordinary interactions. Equally, they are aware of the unacceptability of favouring gifted pupils and try to base their actions on "transparent" conditions for granting privileges. According to the teachers, these privileges can be achieved by every pupil in the class, although in reality they are intended for gifted pupils only.

Favouring of gifted pupils also took place during modified curriculum that significantly contributed to the segregation of gifted pupils, which in turn encouraged their labeling (Kolb & Jussim, 1994). These were, for example, pedagogical situations of gifted pupil as the teacher's assistant, additional tasks only for gifted pupils, and gifted pupil as captain of group work. Further context explaining the reasons for using these activities only draws attention to the redundancy of labeling gifted pupils by their teachers. Interestingly, in cases where the

teacher decided to use a modified curriculum, this was not predominantly used to further the development of the pupil. Pupils were isolated in order to work on activities not intellectually challenging (e.g., colouring a picture, helping the teacher, relaxing) or on activities developing lower cognitive goals (revision, work based on the same algorithm or on swiftness of work). Yet, these activities were also performed by the other pupils in the class, which shows that in fact, there was no need to isolate gifted pupils in the first place. When the teachers applied challenging activities, they were behaving unethically in relation to the other pupils (e.g., supplementing the teacher's explanation or group work with the "captains"), thus enhancing the division within the class.

Most forms of favouring that we were able to witness were immediately obvious to the researcher. Nevertheless, we have also detected situations that were hidden in the curriculum and became obvious only after a more thorough examination of the context. These were activities in which pupils were assigned specific tasks, and their regular use (even overuse) reinforced the identities within their new roles. Occasional use of these activities would not lead to labeling and favouring. Within the theory of labeling the gifted, we therefore reveal another condition – "rigidity." Our assumption based on the theoretical basis, which claims that the favouring of gifted pupils occurs in order to further the development the gifted pupil (Tomlinson, 2013), has proved to be completely wrong.

Favouring gifted pupils is perceived as the attribute of the labeling theory (Delisle, 2001; Gagné, 2018; Marsh, 2008). Labeling is often described as a cyclical process (Shang-Yu et al., 2020) beginning with the existence of a label and progressing through the giving of the label to pupils who gradually gain the negative consequences of the label through the adoption of the label (Gates, 2010; Matsueda, 2014; Meadows & Neumann, 2017). Given the labeling theory described above, we can define the labeling process (with a focus on favouring) within our research context.

The connotation of the word "giftedness," which determines the content of the label, can be associated with the favouring of gifted pupils (Freeman, 2005). According to our findings, the label is associated with the privilege of the gifted pupil and drawing attention to his/her differences. The gifted pupil is assigned to this label after the professional identification of giftedness. The label is further highlighted by a gradual integration of the gifted child into an official direction, further developing the giftedness (Gates, 2010), in our case by inclusion into "supportive measures." When the label is assigned to a child, positive as well as negative consequences of labeling are noticed (e.g., Clark, 2013; Freeman, 2005; Gates, 2010; Heward, 2013; Matthews, et al., 2014; Moulton et al., 1998). With favouring, the pupil is privileged, his/her giftedness is externally overlooked, and he/she is given a role model. Then the individual is separated from the original social group and forced into an individual or collective segregation within an alternative social group (Kolb & Jussim, 1994). Within the curriculum for gifted pupils, the pedagogue prefers activities in which he/she segregates the gifted, such as gifted pupil as the teacher's assistant, additional tasks only for gifted pupils, and gifted pupil as captain of group work. Rigid use of these activities further intensifies the negative consequences of favouring.

Another research question was to find the typical features of pedagogical situations leading to favouring. We consider the category "gifted pupil as the main participant of the lesson" to be the key category, synonymous with our study. We can divide the broader context of the topic into six key factors that connect all the elements that have been detected. The factors determined the position of the elements in the relation analysis. These factors could be found as a typical feature of pedagogical situations leading to favouring (Figure 3, corners of the relation analysis). By interconnecting the factors, the favouring is intensified (one factor may not lead to the favouring).

- Privilege: Gifted pupils are a privileged group that receives above-standard care to the detriment of the other pupils in the class.
- Representation: Gifted pupils represent the class, they "possess" a high IQ and other positive qualities and skills. They serve as role models for the others.
- Performance: Gifted pupils and their products are presented and given as examples at school.
- Segregation: A modified curriculum for gifted pupils leads to them being singled out. Only gifted pupils work on different activities, which are often pointless (they do not develop the personality of gifted pupils).
- Lack of purpose: A modified curriculum is rather ineffective; it does not cultivate the educational needs of gifted pupils.
- Rigidity: A teacher who regularly and rigidly uses the same educational strategies over and over encourages the labeling of gifted pupils. If the identified strategies were used occasionally, functionally, and deliberately, they would not lead to inappropriate labeling.

Limitations

Labeling is influenced by a constantly altering social context (Goffman, 1986). Its specific and unique nature, which shapes research results, is therefore the main limitation of the study itself.

The identification, analysis, and interpretation of the situations detected need to be approached with utmost sensitivity. The form of labeling is pre-determined by the initial contact of the researcher with the school and the teacher, by explaining the aim of the study, the way the researcher is perceived by the teachers and pupils, what the teacher is willing to demonstrate, and other factors.

The researcher plays an important role because through their passive and subconscious actions they may significantly affect the observed phenomenon. We considered this fact before conducting the study and made a conscious effort to minimize any external interference in the labeling of gifted pupils.

We know also that the composition of the team significantly affected the identified situations. We looked at the issue from the perspective of teachers working in the field of gifted education (see research team section). Gender imbalance not only by the research team but also by the monitored teachers (women only) also played a significant role. Boys (18 boys and six girls) clearly predominated in the group of gifted pupils, and these, in contrast to the often hidden talents of girls, more clearly require the focus of the teacher's attention on the development of their talents (Kerr et al., 2012). This may also have influenced the identification of favouring situations.

Conclusion

Labeling gifted pupils has positive and negative consequences. One form of labeling is the favouring of gifted pupils. Our findings show that favouring has a wider negative effect on all participants in the educational process. Moreover, where gifted pupils are concerned, it does not lead to further development of their giftedness. The study draws attention to the existence of formalized care for the gifted, for which school practice is not sufficiently prepared, mainly due to the absence of didactic competence of teachers to apply constructivist educational methods, functional internal differentiation, and formative assessment. The increasing formalized care for the gifted then places very high demands on teachers to report the support for the gifted, which often leads to unconscious favouring of gifted pupils. Although labeling

is a necessary part of the support provided to the gifted, its negative consequences can be eliminated by the teacher's ethical and professional approach to the further development of giftedness (Tirri & Laine, 2017).

The research was conducted in the elementary schools in the Czech Republic (Central Europe). Given the existence of formal support for gifted pupils in other countries as well (with a comparable socio-cultural background) and the fact that teachers focus on the high demonstrated performance of pupils when defining giftedness (Altintas & Ilgun, 2016; Olthouse, 2014), it can be assumed that favouring will be a domain also in other countries.

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