

## GIFTED EDUCATION IN AFRICA

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I would hope that as soon as we find out that somebody is precocious, we should do all we can to develop that particular ability. The world needs all the geniuses that it can get.

—Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Research on gifted education in Africa has taken place sporadically, and in only a few countries. Moreover, very little (and no comprehensive) research has been undertaken on the topic because of the comprehensive chapter by Taylor and Kokot (2000), which remains the most comprehensive overview of research on the subject in Africa to date. This is deplorable, because there can be no doubt about the importance of education for the gifted (Bar-On, 2007a, 2007b).

Millions of gifted people across the world are never given the opportunity to realize their potential, implying that, through the years, the world may have lost the likes of a Michelangelo, a Ludwig van Beethoven, a Sigmund Freud, a Mother Teresa, a Nelson Mandela, a Desmond Tutu, a Kofi Annan, or any of several other luminaries (Bar-On, 2007b). There are people who, irrespective of gender, mother tongue, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual preference, ethnicity, political belief, race, age, creed, or geographical location, could have made a major contribution to humankind. The situation in Africa is aggravated by rising unemployment rates resulting largely from major changes in the global economy (Maree, 2010, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a). The issue of gifted education can be best understood by

considering Africa's educational, social, political, cultural, and economic history. The reasons gifted African students do not fulfil their potential include adverse socioeconomic circumstances (e.g., not having access to good schooling), war conditions, and a childhood without caretakers. Moreover, society's failure to acknowledge and support these gifted students (including the failure of education departments to acknowledge gifted students as a category of students who warrant special attention) contribute to the challenge of gifted students' failure to construct themselves adequately.

**IMPORTANCE OF THE TOPIC**

Gifted students are often overlooked. Learners' giftedness is often masked to such an extent by prejudicial circumstances that they are "lost" to society (Maree, 2011). The efforts of others to make a difference in their lives can help them escape the trap in which they may find themselves (Bar-On, 2007b). I can mention two examples in this regard, as I met two such students, by chance, while I was conducting research in the Limpopo province of South Africa. The first was a young boy whose parents had "sold" him to neighbors at the age of 5. When I saw the title of one of the chapters of his life story, "Thrown Away by People Who Didn't Care," I arranged a private meeting with him. He was underachieving, angry, and severely depressed. What he needed from me, more than anything else, was someone to confide in, someone to motivate and inspire him. Today, this gifted young man is a top student in engineering at a

major university. The other gifted student I met was a young girl who had been “sold” by her parents to sexual predators for liquor money. She had been traumatized to such an extent that she was considered a deaf mute when she was picked up by the police, wandering in the street and appearing seriously disoriented. Today (after having been placed in a child-care facility managed by a compassionate caretaker, a true “angel”), this bright young woman is a top student whose wish is to “become a doctor or a psychologist so I can help others who have had the same experience I have had.”

Unlike these two examples, many gifted students are never “rescued” and never receive the support they deserve; they are never given a fair chance in life (Bar-On, 2007b).

This chapter covers the contribution (or lack thereof) of education and psychology institutions in Africa in helping gifted students realize their potential and in helping them make the social contributions of which they are capable.

### **The Extent to Which African Countries Appreciate (and Make Provision for the Needs of) Gifted Students**

Taylor and Kokot (2000) stated that South Africa was the only sub-Saharan country that attempted to address the needs of gifted students. They also supported Mitchell and Williams’s (1987) view that Israel and South Africa (the White populations in these countries) used to set the pace in terms of programs for gifted students. Despite the advances that have taken place in the national curricula of many African countries, gifted students in Africa seem to be no better off today than they were previously (Mpofu, 2002; Oluseyi, & Olujide, 2014). However, the African Gifted Foundation (AGF, 2015) established:

A network across Africa of thousands of gifted young people and to direct the continent’s and the world’s premier universities towards Africa’s top 5% gifted population and specifically to members of the African Gifted Foundation . . . [to identify and develop] the 20 million gifted and talented young people of Africa . . . to their utmost potential, for

themselves, for their own countries and for the entire continent of Africa. (p. 1)

In addition to the AGF, another institution, The African Federation for the Gifted and Talented (<http://giftedafrica.com/index.php?d=2>), aims “to provide advocacy or loud voice (sic) for Africa’s Gifted and Talented in consultation with [the] World Council for Gifted and Talented.” It also aims to provide a range of “services related to education in various disciplines.” to identify and manage gifted students. This includes the assessment of students to determine their talent and giftedness, and the establishment of norms and standards for such assessment. Lastly, it aims to develop curricula and resources for gifted students and to promote cooperation with similar organizations inside and outside Africa.

Regrettably, there is little evidence to suggest that either the AGF’s or the AFGT’s aims are being realized, or that these institutions are playing a meaningful role in the quest for the recognition, development, and support of gifted students in Africa.

### **How Giftedness Is Defined, Understood, Identified, Recognized, and Measured in Different African Countries**

Ngara and Porath (2004) suggested that “giftedness is basically a natural trait whose manifestation is masked in culture” (p. 205). For the purposes of this chapter, I use the following definition of giftedness:

Giftedness is the manifestation of performance that is clearly at the upper end of the distribution in a specific talent domain even relative to other high-functioning individuals in that domain. Further, giftedness can be viewed as developmental in that in the beginning stages, potential is the key variable; in later stages, achievement is the measure of giftedness; and in fully developed talents, eminence is the basis on which this label is granted. Both cognitive and psychosocial variables play an essential role in the manifestation of giftedness at every developmental stage, are malleable,

and need to be deliberately cultivated.  
(Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, &  
Worrell, 2012, p. 176)

In this chapter, *giftedness* refers also to exceptional intellectual prowess that develops over time. Whereas some people demonstrate intellectual giftedness at an early age and go on to achieve eminence in later life, others do not show evidence of giftedness at an early age, yet still go on to achieve success later in their lives (Bar-On, 2007a).

**How intelligence is defined in Africa.** Understanding of education and giftedness in Africa is influenced by the wide differences between traditional African views on formal schooling and Western views on such schooling (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2009a). Prior to colonization, African elders used activities such as dancing, singing, drawing, and traditional rites of passage to groom African children in gender-based contexts for later life in African society. Formal schooling, introduced by colonizers, changed the education situation radically (Sifuna, 2008).

*Intelligence*, as defined by Africans, differs markedly from school-based definitions (strongly influenced by Western views on intelligence). Mpofu (2002) argued that literate communities are more inclined to conceptualize intelligence in terms of scholastic achievement. Mpofu (2002) added that practical manifestations of intelligence (held in high esteem in rural African contexts) are not easily translated to school settings, resulting in schools focusing more on academic intelligence. Activities in sub-Saharan African schools also tend to reflect Western intellectual values and outlooks (see also Serpell, 1993; Serpell & Boykin, 1994). Mpofu (2002) cited research that shows that perceptions of intelligence in communities in Zambia and Kenya, for instance, do not correlate positively with scholastic achievement. He concluded that there is little correlation between the educational (school-based) activities in these communities and the activities valued in subsistence agricultural communities. In addition, the intellectual values held high in agricultural communities differ significantly from school-based cognitive values. These differences can be attributed largely to the fact that different communities and cultures

have their own idiosyncratic or accepted standards to ensure their survival and development.

Even though there is some overlap between conceptualizations of intelligence or giftedness in different parts of Africa, there is no generally accepted definition of these concepts. Nonetheless, giftedness is often conceptualized broadly in terms of a creative combination of factors such as aptitude (cognitive view), respectfulness, obedience, trustworthiness, and care for others (emotional view; Mpofu, 2002; Serpell, 1993; Sternberg, 2007). Ruzgis and Grigorenko (1994) believed that African conceptualizations of intelligence tend to center on the ideal of promoting interpersonal relationships and harmony (i.e., the well-being of the group).

**Measuring giftedness in Africa.** There is little consensus on how (gifted and other) students' potential for achievement can best be determined and interpreted, or on how success in life can best be predicted. Kathuria and Serpell (1998) and Ngara and Porath (2004) have drawn attention to the fact that assessments of the potential of gifted Zambian students (using intelligence tests that were developed in Africa and were found to be valid and reliable in African contexts) did not correlate positively with academic success at school. Likewise, measured practical intelligence (as measured by the Raven's matrices) in Kenya (Sternberg et al., 2001) did not correlate positively with academic success.

Most imported models, strategies, questionnaires, and tests developed in North America and Europe are not functional for all cultures and socioeconomic groups in Africa (Munro, 2011). Consequently, there is a dearth of valid and reliable assessment instruments for assessing IQ and aptitude in Africa, thereby complicating the question of what best predicts academic success. The following comment by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (2010) on the challenges faced by education and psychology in Africa is important.

The history of development and use of psychometric measuring devices, instruments, methods and techniques in South Africa have been tainted by the legacy of segregation which influenced

certain stereotypical attitudes and culturally insensitive and inappropriate interventions. As a result, very few tests are available that have been developed and applied with the necessary appreciation of cultural and other diversity concerns . . . for all South Africans. (p. 1)

Some of these instruments and techniques developed in North American and Europe can be adapted, restandardized, and successfully implemented in the African context (e.g., Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Self-Directed Search), but equally important is the need for research on designing and developing strategies and tests in and for Africa (Oakland, Wechsler, & Maree, 2013). Until these challenges have been addressed, education professionals and psychologists will have to think innovatively when drawing on existing knowledge, assessment instruments, and associated strategies to identify gifted students and predict academic and other success in life (see also the section How Career (Construction) Counseling Can be Used to Identify Gifted Children and Help Them Realize Their Potential).

These findings are consistent with the views of Maree and Ebersöhn (2006) and Pfeiffer (2015), who expressed that it is neither sufficient nor advisable to rely on academic achievement alone to measure giftedness, or to assume that exceptional measured cognitive intelligence or aptitude is either the most important indicator of giftedness or the most reliable predictor for educational and career success.

## RELEVANT THEORY AND PRINCIPLES

It is generally accepted that an intricate combination of factors, including academic achievement, self-efficacy, and achievement on intelligence or aptitude tests, predicts and influences people's achievement in a field of study and career (Patrick, Care, & Ainley, 2011).

Wechsler (1940) stressed the importance of considering the effect on life success of conative (motivation- or purpose-related) and noncognitive factors, in addition to cognitive intelligence. Goleman (1996) concurred and asserted that "at best, IQ contributes about 20 percent to the factors that determine life success" (p. 34). Madge (1979), too, stated that

[no] measurement of intelligence or IQ can estimate an individual's chance of becoming an active, responsible member of society, his [or her] role as a community leader, his [or her] contributions to mankind, or his [or her] ability to get along with people . . . human qualities such as warmheartedness, cheerfulness, unpretentiousness, courage and empathy [play a vital role in predicting success in life]. (p. 55)

Madge alluded to the construct of emotional intelligence (EQ) and confirmed what is generally accepted today—superior IQ or aptitude levels alone are no guarantee of educational, career, or life success (Maree & Ebersöhn, 2006).

The current consensus is that various interrelated factors best account for the wide variation in life success (Maree, Elias, & Bar-On, 2009). Salovey and Mayer (1989), Goleman (1996), and Bar-On (2003) helped define and popularize the notion of EQ, which includes the ability to manage one's emotions, get on well with oneself and with others, adapt to change, and deal with stress. According to Bar-On (2007a),

The average predictive validity coefficient for the six studies . . . is .54, meaning that nearly 30% of the variance in occupational performance is based on [emotional intelligence]. When compared with Wagner's extensive meta-analysis (1977), which reveals that cognitive intelligence accounts for approximately 6% of occupational performance, the findings presented here suggest that EQ accounts for five times more variance than IQ when explaining this specific type of performance. (p. 8)

Emotional–social intelligence should, therefore, be included in any discussion on gifted students in Africa. Furthermore, modules on strategies to promote students' emotional–social intelligence and enhance their sense of self, their emotional well-being, and their self-confidence should be included in curricula for gifted students. Research

findings reported by Colangelo and Assouline (2000), Greene (2003), and Maree and Beck (2004) show that even though gifted students are generally intellectually independent, they often display a need for emotional, spiritual, and career counseling.

### How Career (Construction) Counseling Can Be Used to Identify Gifted Children and Help Them Realize Their Potential

As previously mentioned, the idiosyncratic needs of gifted students in Africa are not being met in school classrooms. This shortcoming can be overcome by exposing all students to contemporary career counseling, which lends itself to the respectful, scientific identification of gifted students and to the support and inspiration of such students to optimize their potential (Maree, 2013, 2015c).

Traditional intelligence and aptitude tests are less successful in identifying giftedness among African students (Elhoweris, Mutua, Alsheikh, & Holloway, 2005; Munro, 2011). Moreover, only a handful of psychometric tests have been designed with the needs of the majority of African people in mind. Test developers have generally ignored the critical importance of cultural relevancy when designing and standardizing tests (Pope, 2013). Career counseling administered in a manner that recognizes the individual's educational, cultural, economic, social, and historical background can enhance students' career adaptability, equip them with the know-how to respond appropriately to rapid global changes and career-life transitions, and enable them to not only survive but thrive during trying times, (Glavin, 2013).

This can be achieved by shifting the focus from implementing objective approaches in isolation to merging subjective and objective approaches in career counseling. The disappearance of previously predictable work environments has necessitated this shift, which is eloquently captured in the Xhosa proverb (*Xa umculo utshintsho nomduda uyatshintsha*, which means when the music changes, so must the dance). An integrated, qualitative and quantitative approach to career counseling is needed. Such an approach, based on the notion of a career-life story and closely aligned with career construction

counseling theory, “emphasizes narratability to tell one’s story coherently, adaptability to cope with changes in self and situation, and intentionality to design a successful life” (Hartung, 2013, p. 11). It enables career counselors to identify gifted students more easily and can also be used to help such students realize their potential and make major social contributions (Savickas, 2011). Munro (2011) agreed with this statement, arguing that a blend of qualitative and quantitative assessment techniques and procedures are recommended to identify students who are linguistically and culturally diverse. Reflexive construction, deconstruction, coconstruction (the relationship between client and counselor), and reconstruction (Savickas, 2011) lie at the heart of the “new” approach to career counseling. This approach is, therefore, particularly relevant for use in African contexts, which have already been moulded by *Ubuntu*, *iSinti*, *Ujamaa*, and related principles (Nussbaum, Palsule, & Mkhize, 2010).

Merging quantitative approaches (test scores) with qualitative approaches (stories) enables career counselors to identify giftedness and helps gifted students find meaning in life (Munro, 2011; Savickas, 2011). It also helps them accept authorship of their career-life stories and become adaptable, employable, lifelong students. This approach underlines the importance of reflection (looking back on students' thoughts and actions) and reflexivity (planning for the future).

### Role of *Ubuntu* in Defining and Shaping Concepts of Giftedness

Afrocentrism, which highlights African culture and the contributions of African people to world civilization, embodies the principles of *Ubuntu* (Zulu for connectedness, humanity, and respect for the dignity of other people in the context of community, nature, and universality), *iSinti* (Zulu for the perception that one’s own identity is realized only in the identity of others, and the belief that all human beings are part of one large family; Nussbaum, Palsule, & Mkhize, 2010), and *Ujamaa* (Swahili for the extended family, brotherhood, and familyhood or socialism; the idea that human beings become

persons through other people or the community; Cranford, 1999; Ibdawoh & Dibua, 2003).

Lumadi (1998) believed that African culture values giftedness only when it can promote the interests of families and communities. To a certain extent, the individual is sacrificed in the interests of the common good. Consider the example of Nape, a young African boy who sold newspapers on a street corner to make a living, which is where I first met him. Over time, we became friends, and I learned that he earned 10% of each newspaper he sold. He was the breadwinner of his Soshanguve family, which consisted of his unemployed mother, two brothers, and three sisters. Nape was extremely bright. He had done very well at school until his father died, at which time he had to leave school to take care of his family.

### Concept of Intercultural Competence

Eriksson (2006) maintained that gifted students in developed and developing countries today combine individual ambition with community integrity to promote the ideal of global citizens who embrace Western and traditional values, thereby displaying *intercultural competence*, or the ability to move between the two traditions seamlessly. Taylor and Kokot (2000), however, reported a new trend among urbanized black families (a trend that has emerged more strongly over the past decade), namely an inclination to endorse individual achievement and prowess, thus departing from traditional views on giftedness (Lumadi, 1998).

### PRACTICE AND POLICY ISSUES

Writing from the perspective that gifted students exhibit idiosyncratic and identifiable characteristics, Hoffman, Wasson, and Christianson (1985), and Newell (1989) reported that gifted under-achievers, while displaying a high IQ (or strong aptitudes in general), typically have a low sense of self-efficacy, feel inferior, and often manifest withdrawal symptoms. Their academic profiles also reveal a negative correlation between their measured intelligence and aptitude levels and their academic achievement. These factors should be considered when endeavoring to establish whether a learner is gifted (Maree, 2014c).

Teachers (who are not psychologists) cannot be expected to identify giftedness among students with any great accuracy. Even psychologists still regard measured aptitude or intelligence as the most important indicator of giftedness and predictor of success in life. Test results, for instance, are far too often interpreted in a one-sided manner by over-emphasizing quantitative test results rather than by adopting a holistic and dynamic approach and carefully considering students' idiosyncratic contexts. Because people's agency is negatively influenced by contextual difficulties, the test results of disadvantaged students should be interpreted with circumspection (Foxcroft, 2009; Maree, 2015b). Academic achievements and high scores in aptitude and intelligence tests cannot on their own predict success in life: Measured aptitude or intelligence scores do not indicate "exact", unchangeable abilities, and are influenced by multiple contextual factors. For example, if the circumstances of a disadvantaged learner change, his or her achievement will most likely also change over time.

### Scope and Nature of Education Programs Aimed at Satisfying the Idiosyncratic Needs of the Gifted

**Lack of national plans for the development of giftedness.** It is ironic that although excellence in sport is recognized and those who excel in sport are nurtured and supported (e.g., the design and implementation of special programs to develop giftedness in sport), the same cannot be said for academic excellence. No African country has a national plan for gifted students or makes special provision for gifted students in classrooms. Consequently, few schools in Africa accommodate the needs of gifted students, largely because gifted students are not regarded as requiring special education by education departments or public schools. White papers on education in Africa, discussed next, consistently fail to refer to and elaborate on the issue of giftedness in education.

**Reference to giftedness in South African white papers on education.** Although these ideas may be generalized to other areas of Africa, there is no evidence to suggest that the situation elsewhere in

Africa differs significantly from that in South Africa. Kenyan colleagues, for example, have also expressed concern about the absence of programs specifically designed to meet the needs of gifted students (Kamau, 2005). Sambu, Kalla, and Njue (2014) recently called on the Kenyan government to

develop a curriculum that can be used to teach gifted and talented children, and one that will also be a more practical-oriented curriculum. Teachers should also be trained so that they can have the knowledge and skills to cater properly for gifted and talented children. (p. 243)

A blueprint for the education of gifted Nigerian students was released in 1986, but very little has happened since then to suggest that it has changed the situation of gifted students in that country. Adelodun (2010) has expressed major reservations about key aspects of the document (including its overemphasis on intellectual performance as an indicator of giftedness, its failure to state the minimum qualifications of teachers of the gifted, and the inadequate set of criteria recommended to identify giftedness), whereas Oluseyi and Olujide (2014) stated: “It is therefore imperative to understand why the education of the gifted is necessary for a developing nation like Nigeria” (p. 9).

In its *Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* (a document whose recommendations were to be put into effect over a period of 20 years), the South African National Department of Basic Education (Department of Education, 2001) spelled out the policy and practices of special needs education, but no mention was made of gifted students. Oswald and De Villiers (2013) stated that inclusivity is accentuated and that giftedness is recognized as an exceptionality in the *Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning* document (Department of Basic Education, 2010). It is recommended that differentiation in the classroom should be used to deal with (the idiosyncratic needs of) exceptional students. This recognition seems to signify at least some acknowledgement by the education department the need to accommodate gifted students.

However, the document (Department of Basic Education, 2010) goes on to say the following:

The same activity can be taught to a class with learners who have diverse needs ranging from those with intellectual disabilities to those who are gifted, by differentiating what is taught, how it is taught and how the learners demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcome. (p. 6)

It adds:

Participatory and collaborative learning gives learners experiencing barriers opportunities to learn to contribute to tasks and activities at a level appropriate to their level of development. Highly gifted learners will contribute differently, according to their strengths and interests. Joint planning, discussion and reflection will stretch some learners and add value to the learning of all participants. (p. 68)

This ideal, however, seems highly impractical. In my own experience, a major complaint of gifted students is that they are “used” by teachers to do “boring chores” in classes (e.g., helping to explain work to students who struggle without benefiting themselves). This finding confirms the views of Kearney (1996), who found that teachers in inclusive classrooms often exploited gifted children to do certain assignments, teach or tutor their classmates, and execute upkeep-related chores in their classrooms. Also, I am not aware of any inclusive classrooms where this guideline has been successfully implemented. The recognition of giftedness has not led to any demonstrable changes in how gifted students are accommodated in classrooms. The *Draft Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support* (Department of Basic Education, 2011, 2014), which was aimed at building an inclusive education and training system in South Africa and rolled out as part of the implementation of the South African government’s Education White Paper 6, likewise contains no reference to giftedness or any indication that giftedness is considered a special needs category.

**Focus on South African training institutions.** South African teacher training institutions do not make any provision for the training of teachers to deal with the needs of gifted students in their learning programs and modules. In a chapter by Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2009b), the authors stated that gifted students in South Africa are worse off now than they have been at any stage in the history of the country. They added that there is no encompassing national plan to enable gifted students to construct themselves (i.e., realize their potential) adequately, and they concluded that “in Africa, even in the 21st millennium, separate education programs for the gifted are viewed with skepticism and associated with colonialism, the fundamental educational goal being *education for all*” (p. 392). This was adopted by the Jomtien conference in Thailand in 1990 and in the ensuing Dakar Framework for Action document adopted at the World Education Forum meeting held in Dakar, Senegal (UNESCO, 2000). Participants at these conferences stressed the importance of progress toward greater cooperation among countries and acknowledged that the enhanced communication capacity globally, as well as the proliferation of information could boost the cumulative experience of stakeholders in terms of reform, innovation, and research. This, in turn, could imply that the goal of basic education for all might, for the first time ever, become achievable. Acknowledgement was expressed of the immeasurable value of education to address global challenges, for instance, increasing debt, the effect of economic regression, civil wars, runaway violence and crime, and corruption (especially in least developed countries). Moreover, the significance of basic education as the basis and underpinning for lifelong learning and development was emphasized. This gave rise to the acceptance of the notion of education for all declaration: “Every person—child, youth and adult—shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs” (UNESCO, 1990, pp. 1–2).

### **Theoretical Underpinnings of the Approach to Gifted Education in Africa**

The periods of precolonialism, colonialism, and postcolonialism each impacted gifted education.

More specifically, the extent to which gifted education received attention in the countries in Africa depended largely on their status as developed or developing countries. In countries where segments of the population displayed typical developed country characteristics (e.g., South Africa), gifted education received far more attention during colonialism. Africa’s intention, especially after colonial rule, to ensure, first and foremost, education for all (UNESCO, 2000) impacted negatively on the provision of gifted education. In virtually all African countries, the phenomena of large classes and high learner-to-teacher ratios, inadequate teacher training, minimal parental involvement, inadequate provision of teaching and learning resources, and a general lack of a teaching and learning culture prevented any focus on the needs of academically gifted students. Moreover, labor unions and sectarian entities such as Boko Haram (“Western education is forbidden”; Newman, 2013, p. 1), which operates in and around Nigeria, have had a major influence on how gifted education is approached. Gifted education is seen as a Western concept and frowned on by people who believe that the emphasis should be on facilitating education for all instead of placing particular emphasis on the needs of intellectually gifted students.

***Ubuntu, iSinti, and Ujamaa as lenses through which giftedness is conceptualized.*** How giftedness is defined on the African continent has been influenced by traditional African perspectives as well as Western perspectives. Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2009b) contended that education departments across Africa still regard separate education programs for gifted children as a remnant of colonization and contrary to the continent’s stated aim of education for all.

The Zulu proverb *Umntu ngumntu ngabantu* (a person is a person because of/thanks to other people) captures the essence of the three words (and implied principles) in the title of this section. Taken together, these principles epitomize how Africans interpret social reality and supersede all other considerations about the essence of life in Africa. They are key to understanding the way in which gifted students are viewed by African education

authorities. The emphasis on African collectivity has shaped the manner in which gifted education is perceived and executed on the continent. In Africa, it is considered more important to ensure that education meets the basic teaching and learning needs of all people than to focus on the unique needs of gifted individuals (UNESCO, 1990).

**Changing perspectives on giftedness.** The world is changing more rapidly and fundamentally than ever before, and perspectives on giftedness will no doubt also keep on changing. The views of parents in rural areas on giftedness differ widely from those of city dwellers. In rural areas, parents still admire and nurture the traditional skills of artists and craftspeople as reflected in music, dance, pottery, weaving, woodwork, and basketry (Lumadi, 1998). Women's role is to rear children and work in the fields rather than focus on their own careers. In cities, more and more women, too, have a paid job to help the family survive but also to help cover their children's education-related expenses. Moreover, in urban areas, there is an increasing emphasis on academic achievement. In cities, parents tend to value individual and academic achievement, whereas rural people generally set more store on collective interests.

## FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS AND DIRECTIONS

The situation of many gifted black students (including those who are never given an opportunity to construct themselves or those who do not complete their studies and end up unemployed) is particularly worrying. Sadly, little is being done to meet their educational and counseling needs. Also, career counseling in Africa is available only to students who can afford this often very expensive service, which excludes most black students (Maree, 2013). Therefore, many gifted students in Africa do not complete their schooling, do not achieve adequate marks at school to qualify for tertiary studies, or leave school without having acquired important life skills or business training.

The future of gifted education in Africa looks bleak. Despite grandiose talk of an African Renaissance and the extravagant promises of an African

revival made during meetings between African heads of state, little is being done on the ground to realize these ideals. One can, therefore, concur with Adelodun (2010): "What[ever] expenses are incurred in educating the gifted, their super-normal contribution to the development and sustenance of the society, more than compensates for this . . . [these] 'intellectual giants' . . . can launch our society into the much desired technological age" (p. 72). Enabling gifted students to develop their sense of critical consciousness (Blustein, 2015) and realize their potential will not only enhance their self-efficacy and fulfil their need to survive and connect with others, but will also enable them to make meaningful social contributions with "unimaginable benefits to society" (Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Worrell, 2012, p. 186).

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