

## ABLE AND GIFTED: A CASE STUDY OF YEAR 6 CHILDREN

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The aim of this exploratory research was to identify, examine and draw recommendations from analysis of the similarities and differences between able and gifted 10-11 year-olds, where 'able' refers to high achievers, and 'gifted' to exceptionally high achievers. The research draws upon Szabos' (1989) characteristics of 'bright learners' and 'gifted learners', and Krutetskii's (1976) structure of mathematical abilities. It addresses the questions: What distinguishes a child who is gifted in mathematics from the larger group of able, above average children? Are these differences in degree or differences in kind?

Based on the above definitions, two schools were asked to identify an able and a gifted 10-11 year-old child. Using a case study methodology, clinical interviews were then conducted with each of the four children. The interviews were video taped, transcribed and analysed using a grounded approach.

Many broad similarities were found between the able and gifted, including their approaches to procedural tasks. The results presented here will focus on the more subtle qualitative differences in kind observed in the children's approaches to conceptual tasks. Key differences appeared to be the tendency of the gifted to plan a strategy, solve problems in an efficient and elegant manner, and justify solutions for themselves. Drawing on the children's responses to conceptual tasks, a model was developed to characterise the strategically based methods of the gifted. It will be presented and illustrated with examples of children's work. This research supports the use of mathematically difficult tasks to enhance the identification of giftedness (Niederer & Irwin, 2001; Span & Overtoom-Corsmit, 1986). It also raises many questions, calling for further data collection and evaluation of the model.

### REFERENCES

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