SCHOOL GIFTEDNESS AND CORRELATIONS WITH MOTOR AND SPORTS ACTIVITIES

PLUSDOTAZIONE SCOLASTICA E CORRELAZIONI CON ATTIVITÀ MOTORIE E SPORTIVE

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Double Blind Peer Review

Citazione
Ascione, A., & Tafuri, D. (2024). School giftedness and correlations with motor and sports activities. *Giornale Italiano di Educazione alla Salute, Sport e Didattica Inclusiva*, 8(2), Edizioni Universitarie Romane.

Doi:
https://doi.org/10.32043/gsd.v8i2.1103

gsdjournal.it
ISSN: 2532-3296
ISBN 978-88-7730-493-3

ABSTRACT
Continuous socio-cultural progress imposes the need to respond, from a pedagogical-educational point of view, to the different abilities and needs of students at school (Turemuratova, Minajov, Bekniyazova, 2023). School giftedness, namely the presence of above-average intellectual and creative abilities, represents a challenge and an opportunity for contemporary educational systems. This study was conducted in partnership with two Comprehensive Institutes involving ten primary school sections for a total of 300 pupils and explores the correlations between school surplus endowment and students' participation in motor and sports activities, with the aim of identifying potential benefits and challenges.

Il continuo progresso socio-culturale impone la necessità di rispondere, dal punto di vista pedagogico-educativo, alle diverse capacità e bisogni degli studenti a scuola (Turemuratova, Minajov, Bekniyazova, 2023). La plusdotazione scolastica, ovvero la presenza di capacità intellettive e creative superiori alla media, rappresenta una sfida ed un'opportunità per i sistemi educativi contemporanei. Questo studio è stato condotto in partnership con due Istituti Comprensivi che hanno coinvolto dieci sezioni di scuola primaria per un totale di 300 alunni ed esplora le correlazioni tra la plusdotazione scolastica e la partecipazione degli studenti alle attività motorie e sportive, con l'obiettivo di identificare potenziali benefici e sfide.

KEYWORDS
Inclusion, School giftedness, Motor and sports activities, Personalized teaching, Wellbeing.
Inclusione, Plusdotazione scolastica, Attività motorie e sportive, Didattica personalizzata, Benessere.

Received 29/04/2024
Accepted 13/06/2024
Published 24/06/2024

[1] The article is the result of the scientific collaboration of the authors. However, the attribution of scientific responsibility is as follows: Antonio Ascione is the author of paragraphs "4, 5 and conclusion" and Domenico Tafuri is the author of paragraphs "introduction, 1,2 and 3".

Introduction

The Gifted Education movement began in the twentieth century in the United States (Schulz, 2005), and although it has made many contributions to the study of human potential, it has been marginalized within the education system (Borland, 2003; Dai, 2016; Sternberg, 2017). The current historical moment focuses on the development of talent, motor activity and critical and creative thinking. Using a type of approach in which physical activity prevails to promote the education of talents (Miranda, et al., 2019) does not mean not taking into account those who, apparently, do not possess any ability, but proposing a form of personalized teaching in order to avoid that the related identification and education practices may prove inadequate to respond to the request to develop the numerous and varied talents (Perla, Vinci, 2021).

1. Inclusion and talents education

The conception of talent has shifted from a static, monolithic view to an understanding of human competence as multidimensional, modeled and contextually through the dynamic interaction of both endogenous and exogenous forces (Feldman, 2003; Tannenbaum, 1983; Renzulli, 1986; Witty, 1958), and increasingly differentiated and integrated through the development (Dai, 2010; Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, Worrell, 2011). This is intended to explain that one can be gifted in some situations and not in others, so talent represents a malleable rather than a fixed quality (Margiotta, 2015) and it is for this reason that the teacher must have a mindset of growth of the potential of each one and not fixed preconceptions (Perla, 2013). In this regard, a good teacher must offer development paths adapted to each student through different and motivating strategies and methodologies, so that they are subjected to qualitatively different developmental tasks in which each must strive to progress towards a higher level of competence (Feldhusen, Hansen, 1988).

An effective and efficient education system aims at maximally developing human potential regardless of who is most likely to excel (Aslan, Shiong, 2023). The task of the educational institution, therefore, is to produce teaching strategies capable of optimizing the learning of each pupil taking into account strengths, interests and preferences (Turemuratova, Minajov, Bekniyazova, 2023). Fostering the development of each student's potential means considering each student's potential, resources, tools, learning supports, and strengths (Vladut, Vialle, Ziegler, 2016). In doing so, identification and educational interventions become a system of

adaptation to a variety of trajectories and developmental paths and proactively promote individual development.

Talent education and general education represent a division of labour and not two different educational systems, since, in some respects, talent education complements general education (Frabboni, Baldacci, 2009). In this sense the school is able to create a diverse group of students, a variety of trajectories and paths of talent, greater connections with personal interests and aspirations, therefore, a personalized educational system (Valditara, 2024), healthy and effective capable of enhancing all forms of excellence capable of generating individual self-realization and social vitality (Zanetti, 2016).

The educational offerings are not intended to serve gifted pupils exclusively, but to accommodate a variety of talents and pathways, each intended to include excellence (Callahan, Plucker, Gluck, Rodriguez, 2020). With the latter term, if referred to school standards, we want to define school performance calibrated on existing models. If it is to be defined by factors such as creativity, research competence, then the school curriculum must be expanded with activities that lead to the acquisition of new skills (VanTassel-Baska, 2021). If the curriculum is difficult to edit, then programs and opportunities outside of the curriculum can be provided. In the event that even this strategy does not meet the required goals, then specialized programs and schools can be created to offer authentic and advanced experiences.

2. Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent

Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) proposes a clear distinction between the two basic concepts in the field of gifted education. The term Giftedness is intended to define the possession and use of untrained and spontaneously expressed higher natural abilities (called aptitudes or gifts), in at least one domain of skills, at a level that places an individual at least 10% above his peers.

The term "talent" is intended to define the superior mastery of skills (or abilities) and knowledge systematically developed in at least one field of human activity to a level that places an individual at least in the top 10% of peers who are or have been active in that field or fields. Gagné proposes four types of "natural" potentialities, even if they are not innate:

1. intellectual (e.g. reasoning and critical skills);
2. creative (such as, for example, invention and imagination);
3. socio-affective (e.g., intuition, empathy, touch);

4. sensorimotor (auditory ability, coordination).

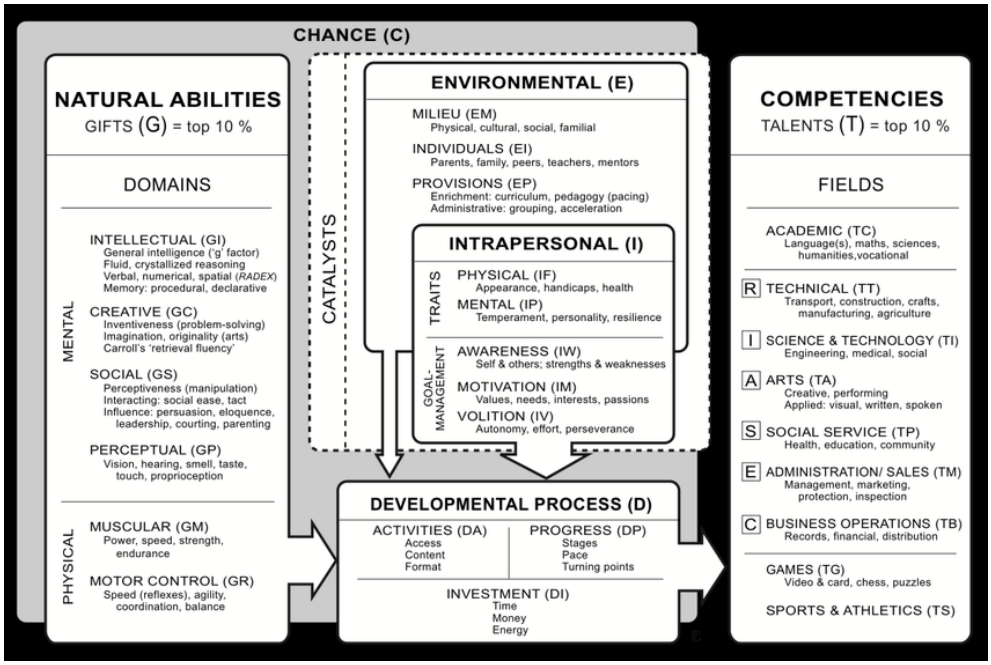

Figure 1: Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) (Gagné, 2013)

Aptitudes or gifts can be observed easily and directly in young children because environmental influences and systematic learning have exerted their moderating influence only to a limited extent. However, they still manifest themselves in older children and even in adults through the ease and rapidity with which individuals learn new skills in any field of human activity. The easier or faster the learning process, the greater the natural abilities. As defined in the DMGT, talents emerge progressively from the transformation of these high aptitudes into well-trained people and systematically developed skills in characteristics of a particular field of human activity or performance (Gagné, 2004). For example, manual dexterity, understood as a natural physical skill, can be modeled into the particular skills of a pianist, painter, or video game player. A In the same way, intelligence, understood as a natural ability, can be shaped in the scientific reasoning of a chemist, the analysis of a chess player, or the strategic planning of an athlete. Therefore, talent necessarily implies the presence of natural abilities well above average; You can't have talent without first being gifted. It is possible that the presence of natural abilities well above average remain simply gifts, therefore not translatable into talents, as in the case of the phenomenon of scholastic underachievement among intellectually gifted children (De Simone, Annarumma, 2018). In this regard, the process of talent development manifests itself when the child or adolescent

engages in learning and practice in a systematic way. This process can be facilitated or hindered by the action of two accelerating factors:
- intrapersonal factor;
- environmental factor.
The former are divided into physical and psychological factors, both of which can be partially influenced by the genetic heritage. Among the psychological aspects, motivation and willpower play a key role in initiating the process of talent development, as they guide and support it against obstacles, boredom and failures that may arise. Obviously, some hereditary aspects of behaving in certain ways (temperament), or modes of behavior acquired over time (traits and disorders), contribute significantly to sustaining and stimulating, or slowing down and even blocking, the development of talent.
As far as the environmental factor is concerned, it manifests its influence both at a macroscopic (geographical, demographic, sociological) and microscopic (family, personality, socio-economic condition) level. Therefore, many people can exert a positive or negative influence on the talent development process (parents, teachers, educators, friends).
In the DMGT, the threshold for both talent and talent concepts is placed at the 90th percentile (about 1.3 standard deviations above the mean). In other words, those who belong to about the richest 10% of the relevant target group in terms of natural abilities (by talent) or achievements (by talent) can receive the relevant label. Within the top 10% of "moderately" gifted or talented people, the DMGT recognizes four progressively more selective subgroups. They are labeled as "moderately" (top 1:100), "highly" (top 1:1.000), "exceptionally" (top 1:10.000), and "extremely" (top 1:100.000). Obviously, the nature of the intervention program that a school develops for gifted or talented students is influenced by the student's level of dowry or talent, as well as the scopes or fields in which it is located.

3. The Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM)

The SEM aims to promote an inclusive school by using resources and redesigning learning environments (Renzulli, Reis, 2021). With this innovative way of doing things, the school curriculum is enriched with exciting educational proposals that inevitably involve the school as a whole, and consequently make it inclusive and a promoter of talent development (Hernández-Torrano, Saranli, 2015). Anyone (headmasters, teachers, students, family) who is part of the student's life is involved and takes an active role in the educational intervention, making the school a true educating community.

Unlike thematic workshops traditionally offered during curricular or extracurricular hours, SEM enrichment activities are designed on the basis of the student's individual interest in order to avoid the tendency to isolation of those with high cognitive abilities. The didactic action of SEM offers students a multitude of creative experiences in which they can experiment by cultivating their interests and talents, favoring the vision of potential and not of deficit. Therefore, difference becomes a value, an inclusive approach to discover everyone's talents (Casino-García et al., 2021).

Enrichment clusters

Enrichment clusters have become one of the most well-known and implemented components of SEM. Clusters are weekly enrichment opportunities that focus on students' interests and pair students with a facilitator (teacher) who helps each student develop a product or service in an area of personal interest. The goals of enrichment clusters involve greater enjoyment of enriched learning, allowing all students to do so by applying advanced content and processes, and using authentic methods and content. Baum, Schader and Hébert (2014) have shown that the use of enrichment clusters in a school has a double value, since students were allowed to become part of a social group, thus some relational problems were eliminated and emotional and cognitive challenges were overcome.

In the SEM school, enrichment activities (such as clusters or the triadic model) recall the centrality of laboratory and experiential teaching in which students mobilize not only their cognitive skills, but also affective, socio-relational, problem solving, team working and creative thinking, in which students become the real protagonists of their own learning.

Resume Compaction

Curriculum compacting, another key component of SEM, (Reis, Renzulli, Burns, 2016; Renzulli Reis 2014) is offered and provided to all eligible students (usually the talent pool, but occasionally other students, based on preliminary assessments) in the SEM. Compaction is a widely used approach to differentiate instruction and combine enrichment and acceleration strategies (Colangelo et al., 2004), so as to allow classroom teachers to differentiate, modify and accelerate the normal curriculum and eliminate portions of previously mastered content (Sorrentino, 2017).

4. Enhancement of talent and physical activity in the United States

Interest in the education of gifted and talented children in the United States was insignificant during the formation of the state. Gifted students were admitted to high school and college on the basis of high academic achievement and their ability

to pay tuition. In fact, a real study of the talents and training of gifted children in the United States has taken place relatively recently, until the first decade of the 21st century, in which the education of gifted children in the United States is heterogeneous, so depending on the state in which they live, gifted children have different opportunities and perspectives in receiving special educational services. According to the Davidson Institute for Talent Development (2009), only six states fully fund education for gifted children, while twelve states do not, and twenty-eight states only provide basic programs for gifted students and fund them partially, so not all gifted children have equal opportunities (Jolly, 2009).

Currently, the main challenges in the field of gifted education are the creation of effective forms and methods to identify gifted students and their socio-pedagogical support, the development of teaching strategies for this category of children, the classification of types of talents and the creation of special programs for their development, the support of representatives endowed with various languages and cultures, the development of standards for teachers' work with gifted children, the use of innovative technologies to work with gifted students in extraordinary conditions, the creation of an educational environment conducive to fulfilling the needs of gifted individuals (Winebrenner, 2001).

The United States has highly advanced network systems exemplified by its grassroots organizations, associations, and special interest groups. An example of this way of working can be done in the sports field as top athletes are not identified and trained in a centrally controlled way, but are put in a position to demonstrate their strengths and interests in specific sports in local clubs and later in university high school and college teams. Finally, the best athletes will be called up for the main state, national and international games.

The U.S. system is highly inclusive and allows for natural selection in the course of talent development, thus avoiding the mistake of rejecting false negatives and maintaining false positives, which could occur in a selective and hierarchical system such as China's. This way of doing things certainly has the advantage of providing equitable access and ensuring diverse advanced learning and talent development needs are met. Bottom-up networks also tend to be more sensitive and responsive to local needs, as they are less influenced by bureaucratic control from above. In short, the distributed network systems approach, as opposed to the hierarchical one, presents a highly developed social support infrastructure, equitable access and maximum participation.

5. Job description

This work involved ten primary school sections for a total of 300 pupils and 15 teachers, including 2 physical education in the 2023/2024 school year.
The research activity investigated from a quantitative point of view the trend of the school and motor-sports performance of the learners, focusing on three soft skills (leadership skills, teamwork and stress management), while as far as the qualitative aspect is concerned, the psycho-physical and social well-being and the positive effects that they can produce in school performance from the point of view of teachers have been analyzed, paying attention to the identification and characteristics of the surplus endowment with an inclusive approach.
As far as teachers are concerned, two types of training have been proposed: in etivity and in plenary. The total meetings were 4 of 2 hours each on the following topics: identification and characteristics of the surplus endowment with an inclusive approach involving the use of the scale for the assessment of pupils' motor and sports potential (SISP) (Platvoet, Elferink-Gemser, Baker, Visscher, 2015) structured in 6 main items (Table 1), following the principle established by Bailey and Morley (2006), according to which physical education develops five skills (psychomotor, cognitive, interpersonal, intrapersonal, creativity), which lead to four possible outcomes related to soft skills (lifelong physical activity, rewarding experience and stress management, sports leadership and elite and team sports performance).

Sports Potential Identification Scale			
item		*Number of pupils identified*	*Soft skills identified*
1	Ability to work		
2	Sports Learning Skills		
3	Intellectual capacity		
4	Interpersonal Skills		
5	Creative Ability		
6	Motor Skills		

Table 1: Scale for the identification of sports potential proposed to teachers

Subsequently, after the initial training of the teachers, the motor-sports expert was included in the classroom for 12 hours a month. Co-teaching has been useful to improve and make more effective the educational practice in the context of the classroom precisely to respond to the presence of groups of students with

distinct educational needs, trying to enhance the only tool that everyone possesses: the "body". Before co-planning inclusive activities, physical activity teachers were asked to carry out a targeted observation of the classroom context and to reflect critically on the expectations that they themselves placed on gifted pupils. In order to detect and evaluate the conceptions and representations on the surplus endowment of the teachers participating in the study, a tool structured in such a way as to have realistic indicators on which to base organizational and cultural improvement plans for the purpose of school inclusion was used. Through this tool, in association with a unipolar Likert survey scale with items of homogeneous semantics, a value from 1 to 5 was assigned (with 5 maximum score value and 1 minimum score), it was possible to examine the opinions and knowledge of teachers regarding: the surplus endowment, the gifted student and how much participation in regular motor and sports activities positively correlates with improvements in terms of psycho-physical well-being, socialization and school performance of gifted students.

• Teachers' opinions on surplus endowment	**Likert scale level**	**% teachers**
• It is useful to know the strategies to understand if a pupil is gifted	3	80%
• In-service training has a positive effect on attitudes and beliefs regarding the feasibility of Gifted Education interventions.	5	94%
• The didactic strategies related to the surplus endowment and their use should be deepened in the initial training courses of teachers and in association with motor-sports activity.	5	92%
• In order to propose activities related to the surplus endowment, it is essential to acquire more knowledge about it	5	85%
• In order to plan the teaching activity, it is useful to receive specific information on the surplus endowment and the pupil	4	90%
• Participation in regular physical activity and sports correlates positively with improvements in terms of psycho-physical well-being,	5	88%

socialization and school performance of gifted students		

Table 2: Teachers' views on surplus endowment

It was found that teachers were biased against certain pupils, in the sense that they had different expectations. Teachers said they expected gifted pupils to show great interest in the subjects, and not difficulties in managing emotions and relationships (they frequently produced maladjusted attitudes). In addition, it has been observed that many teachers tend not to value the interests of the learners and to associate some negative aspects with the student's actions ("he was wrong"; "he stretched himself out"; "with anger"), so much so that, in some cases, they came up with the idea of tracing these behaviors back to pathological attitudes and then making a diagnosis and proposing to support him with a support teacher.

Specifically, 80% of the teachers were not able to exhaustively define the salient features of a gifted student, the remaining percentage collected information on the problems of surplus endowment, in particular 12% asserted that they turned to their specialized colleague and a further 8% in refresher and in-service training courses. Of the 80% of teachers who said they could not describe the characteristics of the surplus endowment, 25% obtained information occasionally from colleagues in their school community; 25% tried to obtain information from communication and information technologies; 30% have resorted to the latest tools of artificial intelligence systems. Finally, it is noted that for 88% of the teachers participating in the questionnaire there is a correlation between the practice of motor and sports activities with improvements in terms of psycho-physical well-being, socialization and school performance of gifted students.

This first survey, concerning basic information, revealed the need for specific training on the part of teachers both for the presence of pupils in a situation of disability and surplus endowment, and in this regard the teachers expressed their interest in the contents and methodologies for inclusive purposes.

As far as the classroom tutoring phase is concerned, some of the approaches of inclusive teaching (metacognitive and cooperative) have been taken into account (Miato, Miato, 2003; Morganti, Bocci, 2017), and some principles of talent education (principle of options, self-orientation, critical-proactive evaluation and apprenticeship (Brazzolotto, 2019).

Another aspect that deserves to be emphasized is the affective dimension that often guides the teacher in teaching choices. In this sense, it has been observed that many times the teacher feels guilt in planning activities for the pupil with surplus endowment, since he associated this work with doing an injustice to

children with special educational needs. This observation highlighted the difficulty that teachers present with regard to didactic differentiation (D'Alonzo, 2016).
As far as the teaching proposals are concerned, they have been planned from week to week in agreement with the other teachers of the class council and always one week in advance of the implementation, in order to give the possibility of making any changes and being able to propose different teaching methods to the teachers. calibrated to the classroom context, and able to promote everyone's inclusion and learning.
In order to create a model for developing talent in physical education (Bailey, Morley, 2006), teachers were proposed to use The Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM), with a focus on the enrichment cluster, so we focused on students' interests in order to help each student develop their leadership skills. teamwork and stress management. Combined with interests, on a monthly basis, each student was able to deepen ((adding 1 extra hour per day)) the subject in which he was most interested.
The survey carried out by the teachers showed that out of 300 pupils 28 have shown that they can be considered gifted, and only for them have been the enrichment clusters on heterogeneous groups of students who share an interest and who meet, during set times within school hours, to work with an expert who has a degree of advanced knowledge and experience in a particular field. In this way, a profile is created based on the students' strengths that includes information about their academic achievements, interests, learning preferences and preferred modes of expression. In order to be able to identify the subjective interests of each pupil and understand the creative potential, the Renzulli Scales (Renzulli, Reis, 2021) and the scales for the identification of motor-sports potential (Platvoet et al., 2015) were used, as they represent an easy observation tool provided to teachers and structured according to a multidimensional view of the surplus endowment. This simplifies the process of identifying students who show high levels of creativity and motivation and provides an indication that they are likely to have high potential.
To avoid creating difficulties for pupils, a safe and accepting environment has been set up, in which there is tolerance for asynchronous behaviour, as each pupil has his or her own rhythms and times, in order to avoid the presence of time pressure and the creation of positive social relationships between peers. Finally, as mentioned above, it is necessary to identify the interests (intellectual, cultural, hobbies, etc.) of the learner.

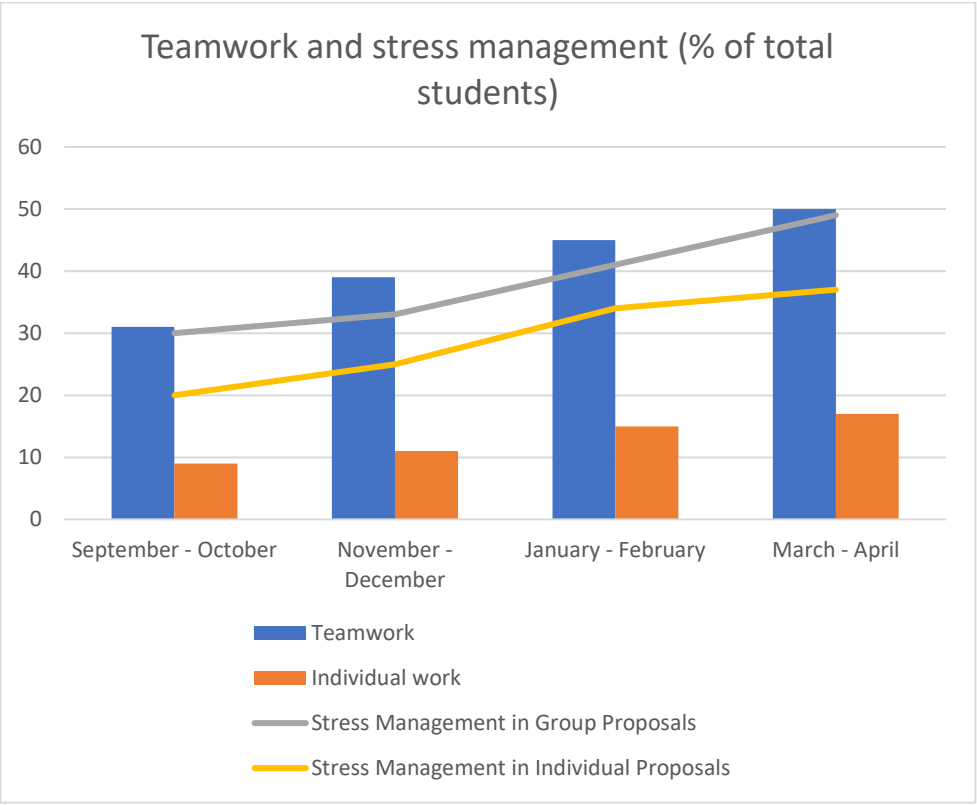

Figure 2: Analysis of teamwork and stress management

The development of students' above-average skills goes hand in hand with the process of developing academic skills and interests both inside and outside the school. Teamwork and stress management in group proposals show that when students work on a cooperative teaching proposal there is greater interest and stress is "distributed" over all the members of the group, vice versa when the teaching activity is individual the stress "becomes" of the individual and therefore affects the student's teaching-learning process more.

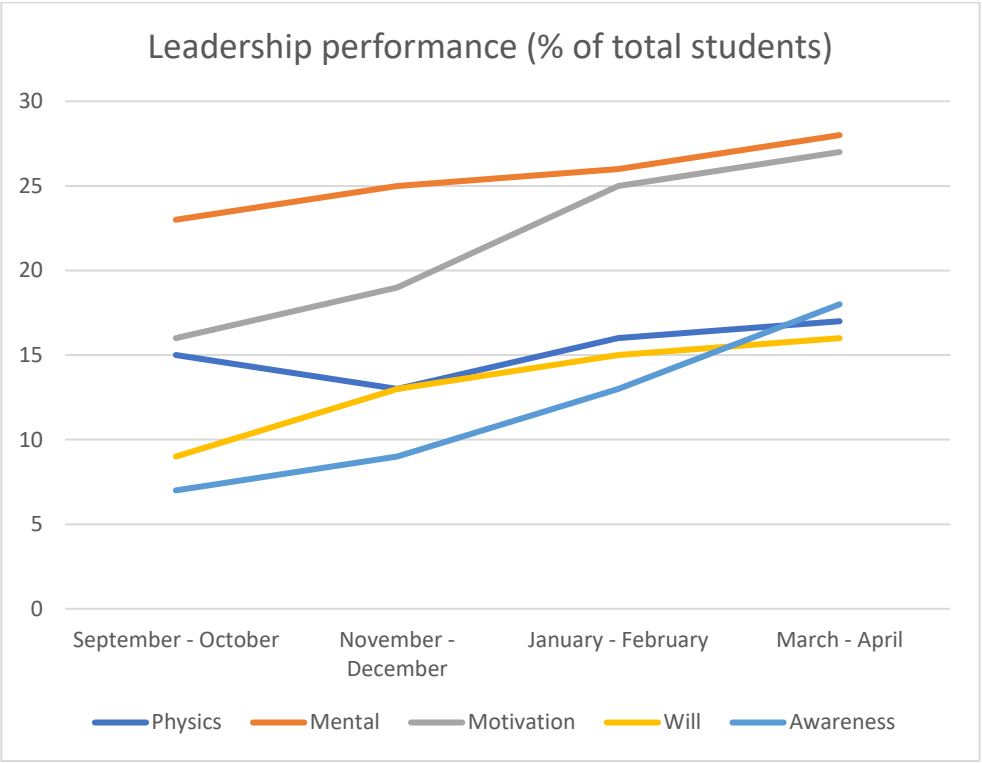

Figure 3: Trend analysis of leadership capacity

It has been observed that when pupils have experienced creative and productive experiences, based on both independent and group motor proposals, they have shown greater leadership skills and interest in making further experiences.
Students participating in the project through the enrichment clusters have using a wide variety of topics, issues, and materials normally covered in the regular curriculum. Subsequently, it was the student who showed his skills in managing the flow of information. In addition, it was highlighted that it is possible to start the didactic proposal with a “type I” enrichment and then subsequently reach a more advanced and self-selected “type III” follow-up. Through the enrichment activity it is possible, therefore, to encourage students to deepen their topics using the way of doing things of motor-sports practice.

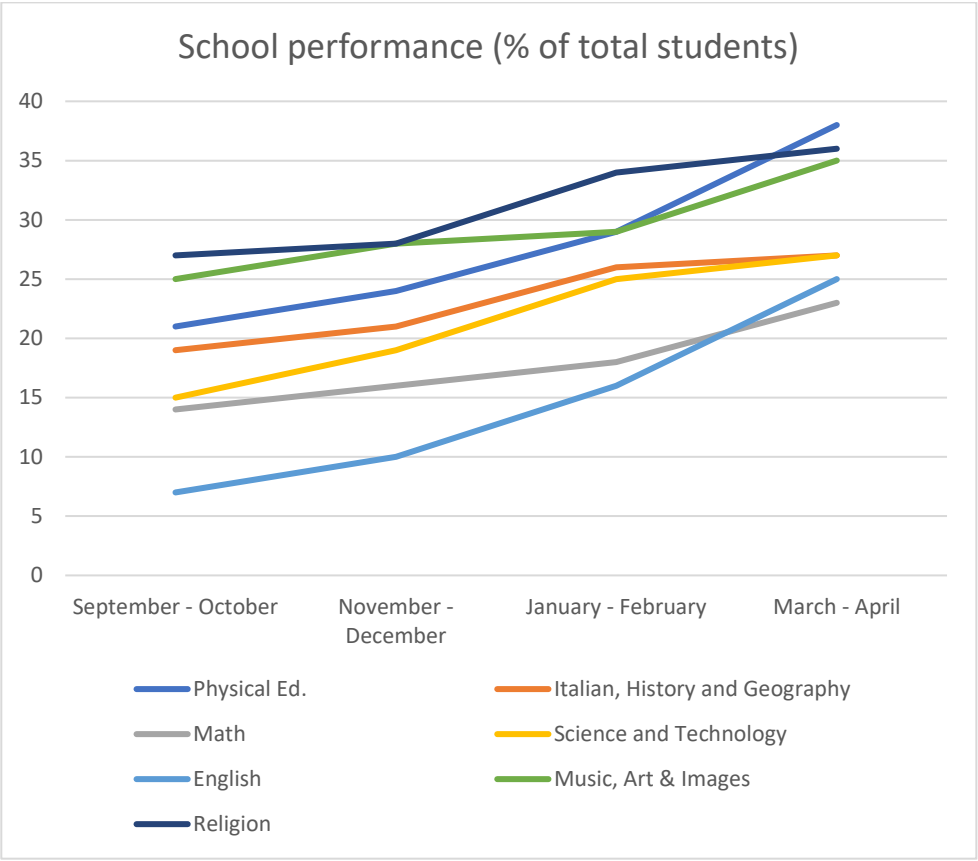

Figure 4: Analysis of school performance trends

Finally, positive changes in motor activity were observed from the point of view of school performance. Over the months, there has been an improvement in all school subjects, although each with a different trend. In particular, for physical education, it can be seen that in the two-month period September-October, from the point of view of school performance, a percentage of 21% is recorded, at the end of the two-month period March-April this figure is already higher than all other disciplines (38%). This analysis demonstrates the validity of a combined approach (talent-motor activity-sports) capable of integrating acceleration, enrichment and differentiation (Milan and Reis, 2020a; 2020b) to create a personalized and inclusive teaching-learning process for each student.

Conclusion

The regular practice of motor and sports activities has a positive relationship with psychological, social and academic performance benefits for gifted pupils. The combination of talent and physical activity in the school environment represents a possible and achievable reality that requires specific professional training based on the knowledge of Gifted and Talented Education (Baccassino, Pinnelli, 2023). It promotes the enhancement of diversity and, therefore, of the inclusive perspective, characterized by the enhancement of everyone's talent.

Initially, talent was equated with a form of high intelligence, so the focus was on theories of intelligence and methods of measuring intelligence. With the change in social conditions came the need to create a differentiated education for the gifted in order to solve social and economic problems.

Through the combination of talent and motor-sports activity, teachers have been able to design teaching in a different way, making it more interactive, inclusive and cooperative (Coggi, Bellacicco, 2023), highlighting how motor and sports activities can act as a catalyst for the development of soft skills such as leadership, teamwork and stress management. In this way, the school is able to eliminate the traditional teaching-learning methods, in favor of didactic proposals characterized by a type of learning based on enrichment experiences, capable of orienting students towards their strengths, thus making them aware of their potential and abilities (Vinci, Sgambelluri, 2020). The conclusions of the present work suggest the integration of personalized motor-sports programs within the educational plans for gifted students, in order to promote an inclusive educational approach that enhances both intellectual and physical and social skills.

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