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Recording Artistically Gifted Pupils in the Fourth Grade of Elementary School

Recognizing artistically gifted pupils is not simple because their artistic talent can be expressed in different ways. Specific abilities of the pupils start to manifest early in childhood and may indicate artistic giftedness (Duh & Batič, 2003). What is more, artistically gifted children have a greater ability of expression and imagination, and master art skills faster than their peers (Brajčić et al., 2018). Artistic giftedness is a natural ability that enables an individual to achieve exceptional achievements in the field of art (Zupančič & Duh, 2003). Giftedness requires a combination of three factors: creativity, above-average abilities, and a high level of motivation to solve tasks (Renzulli, 2000). Additionally, the development of specific abilities or, from an artistic perspective, visual-spatial abilities is also necessary (Zupančič & Duh, 2003). Creativity is defined as connecting information and ideas in a new, original, imaginative, and unusual way (Trstenjak, 1979). It is considered an essential life skill, a fundamental component of human intelligence, and the most important topic in the education of gifted pupils (Wadaani, 2015). The motivation of gifted pupils is not self-evident and is crucial for the development of their potential abilities (Jurišević, 2014). Not everyone can notice giftedness, as it is often hidden (Krafft & Semke, 2008). Gifted pupils in the field of art are not necessarily the most successful in art subjects at school, which is not disputed since the goal of art education in school is not to mold future artists but rather to provide all pupils with basic art literacy and the ability to function in everyday life (Frelj, 2014a). In Slovenia, discovering and working with gifted pupils are carried out in accordance with the Concept of Discovering and Working with Gifted Students in the Nine-Year Elementary School (Koncept odkrivanja in dela z nadarjenimi učenci v devetletni osnovni šoli, 1999), which is divided into three stages – recording, identification, informing parents and obtaining their opinion. During the first educational period, recording is carried out, while identification, informing parents, and obtaining their opinion are carried out during the second and, if necessary, the third period (Žagar, 2006). Identification is based on various criteria (academic performance, achievements, teacher's assessment, competitions, extracurricular activities, and the opinion of the school counselling service) and does not involve testing. The identification includes a more detailed examination, in which teachers assess the pupil with the help of the assessment tool, or the school psychologist performs ability and creativity tests. In the final stage, the counselling service, in collaboration with the elementary school teacher, informs parents that their child has been recognized as gifted and obtains their opinion (Žagar et al., 1999). The two studies by Duh and Lep (2008) and Duh and Mohorko (2021) carried out in Slovenian elementary schools have shown that elementary school teachers exhibit insufficient knowledge and are, therefore, less professional in recording gifted pupils in the field of art. Duh and Lep (2008) analyzed the artworks of pupils considered to be gifted based on the opinions of elementary school teachers. They found that 45 pupils (71%) did not exhibit the characteristics of an artistically gifted pupil. Teachers are often not critical enough when evaluating pupils' works or may struggle to recognize original artworks. Among 11 pupils (18%), only subtle signs of artistic giftedness were detected, and in the case of 7 pupils (11%), elementary school teachers correctly recognized the characteristics of artistic giftedness (Duh & Lep, 2008). In the research by Duh and Mohorko (2021), elementary school teachers were less successful, as noticeable characteristics of artistic giftedness were detected in only 7 out of 103 nominated pupils (6.8%). After a detailed analysis of artworks, they could hardly recognize any characteristics of artistic giftedness in 25 pupils (24.3%) that teachers considered artistically gifted. In the case of the remaining 71 pupils (68.9%), they did not observe any signs of artistic giftedness. The results suggest that elementary school teachers were either not critical enough in their assessment or failed to recognize the qualities of pupils who create high-quality artwork (Duh & Mohorko, 2021). The purpose of the research is to

assess the situation and performance of elementary school teachers in recording artistically gifted pupils based on the theoretical background. We were interested in whether there are differences between the opinions of elementary school teachers and the children's actual abilities in the field of art. We were also interested in the number of artistically gifted pupils overlooked in the recording process. In the research, we included three classroom teachers who teach the 4th grade since, according to Koncept (1999), the recording of gifted pupils is usually conducted at the end of the first educational period (in the third grade) or the beginning of the second educational period (in the fourth grade). The teachers' years of service were 19 years, 30 years, and 42 years, respectively. We analyzed the artworks of the pupils from the classes of the included teachers – of those whom the teachers believe to be artistically gifted, as well as those who do not show the characteristics of giftedness in the field of art. The sample included 47 pupils – 21 boys (44.7%) and 26 girls (55.3%), all 10 years old. The collection of artworks took place at the end of the school year in June 2022. It is difficult to discover artistically gifted pupils based on a single artwork and without knowledge of the circumstances of its creation (Frelj, 2014a). That is why we obtained at least three art pieces from each pupil, resulting in a total of 141 artworks collected. The artworks were collected using the documentation method and coded before evaluation. The artworks were evaluated by an expert committee of three art educators who used a theoretically designed criteria for discovering giftedness. It encompasses three different levels: the level of intellectual-optical thematic development, the level of creative development, and the level of design development. After the evaluation, the analyzed artworks of the pupils were classified into three groups. The first group includes pupils who are artistically talented and show signs of artistic creativity, along with numerous characteristics of artistic talent. The second group represents potentially gifted pupils who show specific signs of artistic talent but not to the full extent. Their work seems good, but it is insufficient and incomplete in some segments. These pupils require more guidance in artistic expression. Pupils whose artistic giftedness could not be detected were placed in the third group. Children without the characteristics of artistic talent do not show signs of artistic creativity, and their artworks are in the elementary stage, falling behind their age group. Elementary school teachers recognized only 3 pupils (6.4%) as artistically gifted out of 47. According to the results, few artistically gifted pupils were recorded, indicating a high probability that many pupils who show signs of artistic giftedness were overlooked, as they were not recognized based on the subjective opinions of elementary school teachers. The analysis of the pupils' artworks, evaluated by the expert committee using the aforementioned criteria, showed that there were 6 artistically gifted pupils (12.8%), 12 potentially artistically gifted pupils (25.5%), and 29 pupils (61.7%) without any characteristic of artistic giftedness. Based on these results, it is evident that there are differences between the opinions of elementary school teachers and the actual abilities of the pupils. Based on the analyzed artworks, we found that the teachers correctly assessed two pupils: they were placed in the group of artistically gifted and recognized by elementary school teachers. On the other hand, four pupils were overlooked, even though the expert committee recognized characteristics of artistic giftedness in their artistic works by analyzing their works of art. In one case, we also noticed an inadequate group placement as the elementary school teacher recorded the pupil as artistically gifted; however, the expert committee's analysis showed no signs of artistic giftedness but rather potential artistic giftedness. Using the criteria, the expert committee recognized 6 potentially gifted girls (12.8%) and 6 potentially gifted boys (12.8%) who were overlooked by the elementary school teachers during the process of recording artistic giftedness. We presented three artworks from each group following the educational principle of exemplarity. The first group consisted of artistically gifted pupils whose signs of artistic giftedness were visible in their artworks. The second group included potentially artistically gifted pupils who partially displayed signs of artistic giftedness or whose signs of artistic talent were barely noticeable. Lastly, the third group was composed of pupils in whom



no signs of artistic giftedness were evident. In the analysis of the artworks, we found that elementary school teachers did not recognize all the characteristics of artistically gifted pupils, which means that many gifted pupils were overlooked. This data is worrying because these pupils are later not included in the identification process as outlined in Koncept (1999). Pupils who have been overlooked and show artistic giftedness are not encouraged in artistic expression that could stimulate their development in the field they are good in. Elementary school teachers have a crucial role in recognizing and encouraging gifted pupils in the field of art, and that can contribute to improving the quality of lessons and individual success, strengthening their skills, aiding the development of their potential and creativity, and, ultimately, building their personality. If children learn to appreciate and develop their artistic abilities early on, they have a higher chance of achieving their own success.