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Dhruvā 2014-2023: Special Program of Mensa India for Underprivileged Gifted Children

I strongly support the appeal for funds to carry out this extremely valuable proposal.

As a chartered psychologist, I am not only the UK expert in gifted children but also very well respected internationally. I have completed decades of university teaching and research in this field, most pertinently a 35-year comparative study of identified and non-identified gifted children. I have written 17 books, hundreds of academic papers and given hundreds of international presentations. My expert opinion is based on hard evidence.

The major conclusion from my work is that children who are identified as gifted are normally those who have had adequate provision to learn and develop their potential. I see them as just the tip of the iceberg. A far greater number with much to offer the world are simply not visible. Discovering gifted potential is not easy, but I believe that this Dhruvā program will be successful in that.

No provision for the gifted works in a cultural vacuum. My three international surveys for the UK government provide a unique perspective on the outcomes of cultural assumptions on the gifted which can be compared in world terms, such as measurable scientific advances and economic success. Gifts and talents used creatively are the basis of innovation and competitiveness – vital for any society. Where children are given the opportunities and encouragement to reach for excellence, their societies are more likely to be successful in terms of their economies and qualities of life.

It is not wise to copy directly from one culture to another without recognising possible differences in background and adapting accordingly. The best route for this proposed Indian program is the one being taken by the initiators. It is set clearly within an Indian culture for Indian children whose learning and spiritual needs are to be nurtured in a way which is acceptable to their families. The Dhruvā approach appears to be the best possible in the circumstances.

For exceptionally high level achievement, such matters as self-confidence and satisfactory personal development can be as important as the mastery of actual skills and knowledge. Support for gifts and talents enhances self-esteem, employability, social mobility and cohesion, and is an important ingredient in any programs for underprivileged groups. Dhruvā is proposing curricular and extracurricular forms of support, including the training of educational professionals to recognize and help talent.

Identifying highly achieving children, either by school-marks or intelligence tests, is relatively straightforward, but for the unrecognised potentially gifted, the best way to help their abilities flower is to provide them with the educational means and the encouragement to take up the challenge. To reach a level of excellence in any area, children need the means to learn, which includes high-level tuition, consistent challenge and encouragement.

Around the world there is a growing trend to offer youngsters voluntary access to very high-level opportunities, so that no keen youngster is turned away without a chance to sample it. The Dhruvā program has the potential to affect creativity in India by harnessing the motivation of gifted youngsters and providing them with the means to develop their potential. It also has an important role in changing the context within which the creative individual can operate to reach excellence.

I sincerely hope that the proposed Dhruvā program will be given the support it needs for its success.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joan Zeeman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'Z'. It is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.