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HIGH ABILITIES/ GROWTH AND SOCIAL SKILLS IN CHILDREN: A NARRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract: High Abilities/Giftedness (HA/SD) characterizes people who show remarkable performance and high potential in any of the following aspects, isolated or combined: intellectual capacity; academic aptitude; creative or productive thinking; leadership ability; special talent for the arts; psychomotor ability. Social Skills (SS) refer to a set of behavioral strategies and the capabilities to apply them in social situations involving the expression of attitudes, feelings, opinions and desires, emphasizing respect for oneself and others. The present work comprises a narrative review of the literature, where the national scientific production of the last ten years on High Abilities/Giftedness and its relationship with Social Skills in children was surveyed. The bibliography was consulted in databases such as Scielo, Pubmed and Google Scholar, based on the keywords: high skills; giftedness; social skills. The material was sorted and selected according to the intentions of the study and the information was organized, summarized and described in order to compose a meaningful whole that allowed understanding that there are studies that claim that these children can be emotionally unstable or not. The few studies on this relationship show the need for social skills training and family support and that the assessment must be multifactorial, involving psychological assessment instruments, neurological assessment and direct observation.

Keywords: High Skills/Giftedness; Social skills; Child.

INTRODUCTION

Precocious, prodigies or geniuses are

some titles designated to those people who have a specific skill developed in any area of knowledge and have a high performance (high IQ)¹ in specific areas (SALLUM, 2021).

For Pérez (2016):

[...] the expression AH/SD² has been awarded with several nomenclatures, such as highly capable, highly skilled, well-endowed, brilliant, gifted, person or bearer of high abilities, bearer of genius, bearer of giftedness, talented, supergifted [...] in addition to the traditional discriminatory and prejudiced Nerd and Geek, know-it-all, CDF, among others. (PÈREZ, 2016, p. 46).

Initially, the expression "gifted" was used to "identify individuals who placed themselves in the 5% range in relation to the population, after a general intelligence test. Resolution CNE/CEB n° 02/2001 (BRASIL, 2001) brought, for the first time, the term "High Skills", and in the following year, the Brazilian Council for Giftedness (ConBraSD), started to recognize the term "High Skills/ Giftedness" as the most appropriate nomenclature for this population, as it brings, in essence, a broader concept.

Abilities/Giftedness High (HA/SD) characterizes people who show remarkable performance and high potential in any of the following aspects, isolated or combined: general intellectual capacity; academic aptitude; creative or productive thinking; leadership ability; special talent for the arts; psychomotor ability. (BRASIL, 1995). In addition to the characteristics of being curious, demonstrating a high degree of creativity, people with AH/SD show, from preschool age, the ease and speed to learn.

High Abilities/Giftedness are innate and although genetic traits are observed in these talents, the gifted person needs to develop

¹ Intelligence Quotient, a factor that measures people's intelligence based on the results of specific tests. IQ measures an individual's cognitive performance compared to people in the same age group. Available at: https://www.significados.com.br/qi/. Accessed on: 11/20/2021.

² High Abilities/Giftedness

in an environment that provides conditions to exercise these abilities adequately. (MOURIÑO MOSQUERA, *et al.*; 2013).

Sallum (2021) refers, based on investigations, that people with a high intellectual level would be more responsive to the environment, making them more prone to both mental disorders and physical health problems. It points to an American study from 2018 that evaluated more than four thousand gifted individuals and that indicated a higher incidence of different disorders (including depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism) and allergic conditions, asthma and autoimmune disorders in this population, related to US national averages. The hypothesis proposed to explain this phenomenon suggested that these people have a physiological and psychological "hyperexcitability" to environmental factors. Other studies that individuals with high abilities would have greater psychological vulnerability and an exacerbated emotional and social fragility is widespread, although there are contrary data. The author also mentions studies where it was observed that, on average, these individuals have a good level of self-concept and socialization, as well as levels similar to those of typical children in aspects of personal satisfaction and in the prevalence of psychopathologies, greater risks for depression, anxiety and even suicide, ideas corroborated by Alencar (2007, 2001) and Oliveira, Capellini and Rodrigues (2020).

Oliveira et al., 2020 mentions Del Prette and Del Prette (2017) when stating that Social Skills are considered descriptors of social behaviors available in people's individual repertoire and that a socially competent person "expresses an adequate reading of the social environment, or that is, it correctly decodes the expected, valued and effective performances for the individual in his relationship with others"

(DEL PRETTE; DEL PRETTE, 2008, p. 33).

In addition to Social Skills promoting development, it is observed that, when present in the child's repertoire, they demonstrate better school performance (DEL PRETTE; DEL PRETTE, 2017); and the expression of socially skilled behaviors can prevent the emergence of behavioral problems, as children perform positive interactions with their peers and access social reinforcement, receiving attention and praise.

Oliveira et al. (2020), state that the study of social skills contributes to the understanding of interpersonal relationships. Alencar (2007, 2001) mentions that, depending on the degree of intelligence, combined with other variables, such as social class, gender, possibilities of contact with colleagues with a similar level of intelligence and opportunities for special educational assistance, adjustment difficulties may or may not be observed. Authors such as Oliveira; Capellini and Rodrigues (2020) mention several studies that suggest that young people, especially those with extreme abilities, are more vulnerable to emotional and social problems and greater risks for depression, anxiety and even suicide.

The complexity of the theme, its investigations and its importance for the inclusion of children in school and social life and the stimulus to the expansion of new studies in the area justify the elaboration of this work, which also intends to contribute to the necessary reflections for the quality of life and attention to mental health of people with HA/SD.

Theaimofthis study was to analyze children's high abilities/giftedness, their implications for the development of social skills and their main evaluation methods, presented in this sequence, in order to answer the question: what are the relationships and interferences of deficits in social skills in the development of children with High Abilities/Giftedness

and what are the evaluation methods to identify them? The present work comprises a narrative review of the literature, which brings together diverse and comprehensive sources of bibliographic material that favor the establishment of relationships, analyzes and contextual interpretations of the focus of the study (BATISTA: KUMADA, 2021).

HIGH SKILLS / TALENT AND SOCIAL SKILLS

HIGH ABILITIES/GIFTEDNESS

In Brazil, until mid-2005, the number of people identified with AH/SD was less than 2 thousand. In 2018, it was reported that there were 22,161 students with advanced skills (National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira, 2019). This increase in the number of case identifications resulted from the work of the AH/SD Activity Centers (NAAH/SD), established by the Federal Government in several states, which aimed to identify and promote the development of people with AH/SD (Ministry of health, 2005), which culminated in the creation of the National Registry of Students with AH/SD, in 2015 (Law n. 13,234, 2015).

The cognitive and affective characteristics of children with High Abilities/Giftedness, as well as their socio-emotional needs, require an understanding of some personality traits typical of the group, such as perfectionism, the great need to understand the world around them, to have the necessary mental stimulation, intensity of feelings, sense of humor, non-conformity, introversion. (VIRGOLIM, 2007).

People with high abilities form a heterogeneous group, with different characteristics and diversified abilities; they differ from each other also by their interests, learning styles, levels of motivation and self-concept, personality characteristics and mainly by their educational needs. We

understand that it is the task of educators, be they teachers or parents, to understand giftedness in its most basic aspects and thus become agents in promoting the development of potentials, in order to be able to meet the special needs of this population. (VIRGOLIN, 2007, p.11).

For this reason, both the family and the educators of children with AH/SD need to be able to identify these characteristics in order to understand and guide the child in his development process, in order to help him become a balanced and healthy adult.

The National Guidelines for Special Education in Basic Education (BRASIL, MEC, 2001), consider people with AH/SD to be those who have great learning ability, which leads them to quickly master concepts, procedures and attitudes, highlighting two striking characteristics: the speed of learning and the ease with which these individuals engage in their area of interest. (BRASIL, 2001, Art. 5, III).

This definition draws attention to the fact that children with High Abilities/ Giftedness are students who show remarkable performance and/or high potential in any of the following aspects, isolated or combined:

- a)General Intellectual Ability, involving quick thinking, heightened comprehension and memory, abstract thinking ability, intellectual curiosity, exceptional powers of observation;
- b)Specific Academic Aptitude, gathering attention, concentration, motivation for subjects of interest, academic production capacity, high scores in academic tests and exceptional performance in school;
- c)Creative or Productive Thinking, highlighting originality of thought, imagination, ability to solve problems in a different and innovative way, ability to perceive a topic in many different ways;
- d)Leadership Ability, comprising

interpersonal sensitivity, cooperative attitude, ability to resolve complex social situations, power of persuasion and influence in the group, ability to develop a productive interaction with others;

e)Special Talent for Arts, with performance in plastic, musical, dramatic, literary or scenic arts (with facility to express ideas visually); sensitivity to musical rhythm; facility in using gestures and facial expressions to communicate feelings); and

f)Psychomotor Ability, with demonstration of superior performance in sports and physical activities, speed, agility of movements, strength, resistance, control and fine and gross motor coordination. (BRASIL, 1995a)

Alencar and Fleith (2001) show that some characteristics presented are recurrent and general and more commonly found in gifted people, manifesting themselves in the field of their ability and interest.

Kwiecinski (2012) states that students with AH/SD may have high potential in some disciplines and not so much in others, highlighting that this understanding is important to help children in their development and learning process. According to her, the theory of intelligences is very relevant in the care of students with AH/SD, especially in matters related to low performance in the school space, but standing out in other fields such as art, music, sports, etc.

Virgolim (2007) points out that several Brazilian researchers highlight the need to expand specific services to better understand the characteristics of this group in the country; to meet, in the school and family context, their special affective and cognitive needs; to do more research in the area; and to influence the development of public policies, in the Brazilian context, that favor the recognition,

encouragement and use of their human potential.

Joseph Renzulli's theory of giftedness (2014) points out the distinction between traditional school or academic giftedness and productive-creative giftedness. The conception of the "three rings" of giftedness analyzes three components that relate to each other, in sets of traits and dimensions of human potential, namely – above average ability, high levels of commitment to the task and high levels of creativity. He points out that individuals who are capable of applying this set of traits to any area of their lives are those who have gifted behavior.

Renzulli (2014) argues that giftedness characteristics can arise at different times in a person's life, and include both genetic and environmental factors, thus directly influencing the development of potential gifted behaviors, if they do not receive the appropriate stimuli. He insists on emphasizing that the term "gifted" must be used to qualify a behavior and not to identify people.

Educational care for people with AH/SD

The inclusion of children with AH/SD takes place in different ways in the socio-relational context and starts in family relationships. And the context of formal education, in continuity, is a space that joins the family to contribute, promote and stimulate the development of cognitive, social, psychomotor and emotional skills, through specialized care, which is guaranteed by legislation for the contribution to the global development of these children.

Opinion 17/2001 deals with specialized educational assistance for students with High Abilities/Giftedness (AH/SD); the document highlights the necessary resources to carry out this service, highlighting the carrying out of pedagogical and psychological evaluation procedures for students with characteristics of giftedness; verification of the possibility of

enrolling the student in a grade compatible with their school performance, also taking into account their socio-emotional maturity; legislation compliance with supplementary assistance to deepen and/or enrich the curriculum; acceleration/advance, regulated by the respective education systems, allowing even the completion of Basic Education in less time; the registration of the procedure adopted in the school minutes and in the student's file; include, in the school transcript, the appropriate specifications; include educational assistance for the gifted in pedagogical projects and school regulations, including through agreements with higher education institutions and other segments of the community; it is recommended that Basic Education schools establish partnerships with Higher Education Institutions with a view to identifying students who have high abilities/giftedness, in order to support the continuation of studies in secondary education and the development of studies in higher education, including by offering scholarships, with such support being given priority to students belonging to low-income social strata (BRASIL, MEC/SEESP, 2001).

In 2008, the Document "National Policy on Special Education in an Inclusive Perspective" provided guidance for the area of Special Education, regarding the definition of subjects covered by Special Education policies and referrals for the provision of specialized educational services (BRASIL, 2008). This way, it is important to consider the socioemotional aspects for the schooling of the person with AH/SD.

SOCIAL SKILLS

From the moment he begins to interact with the environment, the child develops an increasingly elaborate repertoire of social skills, recognized as indispensable resources for his development. (ROBALINHO, 2015;

DEL PRETTE; DEL PRETTE, 2017).

Social skills can be conceptualized as a set of behaviors emitted in the face of needs that are presented in interpersonal relationships, which maximize social interactions, allowing a healthy and productive relationship between people. (DEL PRETTE; DEL PRETTE, 2017; 2001).

Related to the development and expression of social skills is social adequacy, which establishes and promotes a healthier and more fruitful coexistence with those with whom one interacts, since interpersonal relationships are guided by respect and recognition of the limits of others. (ROBALINHO, 2015; DEL PRETTE; DEL PRETTE, 2017).

Over time, the acquired social skills evolve and transform according to the relationships and interactions with the world, and the child (and later the young people and adults) develop and adopt their own strategies as tools to connect and interact with people. around them, demonstrating from these, desires and opinions, in order to make the person socially skilled.

Del Prette and Del Prette, (2017), refer to the following capacities as social skills:

- 1.Self-control and emotional expressiveness: comprises the behaviors of recognizing and naming one's own feelings and those of others, self-control, calming down, controlling one's mood, accepting frustrations, showing sportsmanship, among others;
- 2 Civility: including introductions, saying goodbye, knowing how to introduce yourself, saying goodbye, thanking and apologizing, among other actions of politeness and politeness in different situations, adapting to the most varied environments and degrees of formality;
- 3.Empathy: refers to the ability to put yourself in the other's shoes to recognize their needs and feelings;

4. Assertiveness: involves demonstrating in a balanced way, handling criticism well and recognizing mistakes – being able to talk about your strengths and weaknesses, agreeing and disagreeing, asking for opinions, dealing with criticism and teasing, defending your rights, etc.;

5.Making and keeping friends: chatting, exchanging confidences, keeping in touch, exchanging pleasantries, giving feedback, accepting/making invitations, etc.;

6.Solving interpersonal problems: involves the ability to calm down in difficult situations, think before making decisions, choose, evaluate and implement alternatives, evaluate decisions, etc.;

7.Academic social: involve following rules, paying attention, asking and answering questions, giving and receiving help, recognizing and praising the performance of the other; cooperate, participate in decisions, among others.

The authors also emphasize that the learning of social skills occurs continuously throughout life, allowing occasional difficulties or deficits to be overcome. They also refer that this learning changes throughout the life cycle and that, in addition to the influence of conditions related to temperament and sensory abilities, conditioning factors such as the circle of relationships that begin in the family and those extended, such as educational ones – learning experiences – they influence the constitution of one's own style of relating in inter-relational contexts.

The occurrence of deficits in the process of acquisition/expansion of social skills, are, according to the aforementioned authors, refer to lack of knowledge, restriction and opportunities of a model for these acquisitions or even behavior problems. When related to

performance, deficits are related to behavior problems, lack of feedback, failures in reinforcement and excessive personal anxiety. Finally, the authors indicate that fluency deficits are related to all acquisition and performance deficits, and also to personal and processing difficulties. (DEL PRETTE; DEL PRETTE, 2017).

All the factors related to the deficits interfere with the acquisition of skills, whether preventing their emission or the frequency of their expression, as they generate restricted communication and interactions, and which since childhood can compromise interactions, as well as the later stages of development. (DEL PRETTE; DEL PRETTE, 2017). Thus, the more a person interacts socially with others, from an early age, the more tools they will have to establish healthy relationships. Measuring the level of development of social skills can be done by observing the degree of empathy, the ease of making new friends, dealing with frustrations and challenges and establishing partnerships that the individual has.

AH/SD EVALUATION METHODS

The identification of people with High Abilities/Giftedness in Brazil has several obstacles, even with several well-validated intelligence assessment instruments, which allow the identification of people with a high intellectual level. It is still not possible to highlight a well-defined methodology for identifying different types of talent, and the search for identifying children with a profile of High Abilities/Giftedness often comes from the parents of these children.

"The procedures used in the (re) cognition of the characteristics of AH/SD, in most cases, do not contemplate their full potential", say Pavão and Negrini (2018, p.92), since standardized interventions, such as psychological intelligence tests, verify

areas valued by the academic system; they do not investigate areas such as the use of the body, creativity, artistic expressions, among others. As well as the use of procedures such as questionnaires, forms or challenges, they may also not be conclusive, since the process is continuously developed, evidenced by the "direct, careful and continuous observation of natural situations of day-to-day life". (Pavão and Negrini, 2018, p.96). In summary, for these authors, there is no ideal way to identify AH/SD. Therefore, it is necessary to look for procedures that can show the potential of these people in the activity itself, and not just in traditional testing situations.

The study on High Abilities/Giftedness still lacks many investigations so that more conclusive statements can be made regarding its definition, the relationship between high intellectual level and mental health and the conditions that are defined as a double exceptionality of complex identification, treated by SALUM (2021).

[...] frames of individuals who have high abilities in association with some syndrome, such as a disorder or disability, which may include mental disorders or some physical disability. In terms of mental health, studies with this population often focus on children with high abilities and some neurodevelopmental disorder (such as, among others, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder -ADHD, Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Learning Disorders), although the presence of other psychiatric conditions could also include a profile of dual exceptionality. (SALLUM, 2021, p.6).

The analysis of the selected material suggests that the psychological evaluation of Intelligence through IQ tests is important for the identification of people with AH/SD in the academic and general intelligence area, with emphasis on the evaluation of those students who, with superior IQ or very superior and not perceived due to low school performance

and lack of motivation with school, among other factors.

Guimarães (2007) who states that the psychological assessment regarding high abilities must encompass a set of information carried out by the psychologist, with various instruments with the student, the school and the family, to map their cognitive, social, affective and metacognitive conditions, for guiding and conducting actions in the development of their potential and that reveal data about the talents and abilities of students, including formal tests, informal and observation procedures.

In the researched literature, different methods were found for the identification of AH/SD and the evaluation of social skills and their difficulties. The research by Oliveira et al. (2020), referred to the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS), adapted and validated for the Brazilian sample, which assesses Social Skills, behavior problems and academic competence, with three versions: the version for teachers, composed of four factors: responsibility, selfcontrol, assertiveness/social resourcefulness and cooperation/affection; the version for the parents, composed of five factors: responsibility, self-control, affection/cooperation, resourcefulness and civility; and the version for the child, subdivided into four factors: empathy/affection, responsibility, selfcontrol/civility and assertiveness.

The same authors also indicated the Socially Skilled Responses Questionnaire for Teachers (QRSH-Pr), which involves a list of 24 items of socially skilled behaviors presented by children that, when answered by a teacher, applies scores from 0 to 2 that are added, producing the total score of the evaluated child, which can vary between 0 and 48 points.

Finally, they refer to instruments and reporting procedures as indicators of Social Skills, as well as highlighting that direct

observation procedures indicate social competence and SS indicators. They point out that in assessing the skillful repertoire, it is necessary to consider in which contexts (for example, family, school) and with what type of interlocutors (for example, family members, teachers) the resources and/or deficits of social skills are presented. (OLIVEIRA et al., 2021).

The Wechsler Abbreviated Intelligence Scale (WASI) was used by Andrade et al. (2021) in their study on Parenting Practices and Emotional Problems / Behavioral Disorders in Adolescents with High Abilities / Intellectual Giftedness.

Sallum (2021) highlighted the following possibilities, in Brazil, to identify High Abilities/Giftedness: Form for Identification of Giftedness from the Ministry of Education to be used by teachers to identify students with different profiles of abilities, but there is no psychometric data for its use, and this assessment is still based on qualitative terms; Indicative manual "How to identify, stimulate and encourage children with high abilities?" and some instruments for screening and individual identification questionnaires (proposed by Pérez and Freitas 2016): allowing a more general screening process of students, being interesting that they proceed to a more complete objective evaluation, and then a neuropsychological evaluation. In addition, it also allows the evaluation of possible comorbidities and the identification by specific professionals of talents for artistic and sports areas.

Mendonça (2020) in his research made use of the following instruments: Raven's Colored Progressive Matrices Test; Wechsler Intelligence Scale (WISC-IV); School Performance Test (TDE); Questionnaire of Skills and Difficulties (SDQ); Socially Skilled Response Questionnaire (QRSH); Questionnaire of Skills and Difficulties (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire - SDQ); Scale for Assessing the Behavioral Characteristics of Students with Superior Abilities (Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students - SRBCSS); SSRS and Social Skills Assessment System (Social Skills Rating System).

Nakano and Oliveira (2019) used the Screening Indicators of High Abilities/ Giftedness (TIAH//S) in their study, based on the *Gifted Rating Scale – school form* (GRS-S, 2003), evaluating the same areas as that scale.

The Secretary of State for Education of SC, for the identification of children with AH/SD, refers to the Scale for the Assessment of Behavioral Characteristics of Students with High Abilities by Joseph Renzulli; Zenita Guenther's Guide to Observing Gifted and Talented Children; the Base List of Indicators of Giftedness – Parameters for Observation of Students in the Classroom and the Questionnaire for Identification of Indicators of High Abilities/Giftedness – Teachers. (SANTA CATARINA, 2016).

For identified children, the educational approach, according to Sallum (2021) must involve:

- 1. at school, the compaction of the curriculum (curriculum adjustments and encouragement of progress related to performance);
- 2. acceleration (advance in classes, observing the child's performance);
- 3. enrichment (participation in the resource room, extracurricular activities and offer of activities that favor deepening of normally proposed contents).

In addition to this, the family needs to be clarified and expand the school approach, taking care in the process, to support the harmonious development of the relationship between cognition and emotion, the development of value structures, understanding the high intensity of the gifted and creative person that are points of relevance in the mismatch between cognitive, affective and psychomotor development and also understand that the presence of high skills does not exclude the possibility of conditions associated with mental health, considering the hypothesis of the existence of comorbidities, so that in the management of this person, in addition to encouraging the development of social and emotional skills, if you can focus on your intellectual development or your talent, in an integrated way.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to analyze children's high abilities/giftedness and their implications for the development of social skills, as well as their main evaluation methods. After analyzing the selected material, it was observed that children with high abilities/ giftedness have high aptitudes in one or several areas, which can guarantee advantages in their daily and school performance, although there are considerations that indicate their possible association with aspects related to mental health such as Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder - ADHD, Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Learning Disorders, among others and which must be tested by neurological exams.

Deficits in Social Skills are the absence of expected behaviors in specific tasks or conditions, or even behaviors that do not meet certain frequency or proficiency criteria in these tasks. Activities to expand social skills in children and young people with AH/SD must: be systematically planned and integrate parents, educators and the child himself to help him strengthen and build his positive self-image, self-esteem and self-concept; help build an integrated identity; rely on the development of non-violent coping strategies of *bullying*; offer support to maintain a positive interpersonal relationship without the child

having to give up their skills and interests or even come to deny their own talent(s), as in the literature it was found that people with AH/ DS experience, if not understood and accompanied their comorbidities when present, social problems, such as loneliness, difficulties in relationships with peers and exclusions; and emotional issues such as perfectionism, mood and anxiety disorders, loneliness, and introversion.

In addition to school interventions, acceptance by adults, encouragement and family support for children to develop their skills, and a set that encompasses the direction of public policies, knowledge of the general population and efforts to identify the different types of talents and high skills will allow that, more and more, we can help children to develop their maximum potential.

It was also observed that there is a consensus that the tests must not be the only method used to identify AH/SD, since they assess the intellectual potential and operate with tests of functional performance, making it "important to use methods that can identify superior ability also in other areas such as leadership, creativity, psychomotor and artistic skills. It is recommended that the evaluation be varied, based on different instruments and procedures, with different informants and contemplating diverse contexts of social interaction. Such assessments will allow for a more comprehensive mapping of deficits and Social Skills and, thus, guide appropriate interventions, when necessary.

Although there is currently greater awareness of the topic, the following are still needed:

- investments for teachers so that their qualification helps both in the identification and in the service and development of students with High Abilities/Giftedness in Basic, Middle and University schools, disseminating knowledge on the subject in educational systems, school communities;

- providing these students throughout their school life with educational opportunities that meet their academic, intellectual, emotional and social needs, promote the development of critical, creative and research thinking skills and cultivate their interests and skills and their inclusion in everyday life with ease; It is: - support and guidance to families for the benefit of this population; expansion of studies; child support; education of the adults who live with them and in what ways they can stimulate their higher potential so that children with AH/SD have care according to their particular demands and needs, so that their higher potential does not lack opportunities and stimuli that allow them to evolve as people in their particular condition.

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