

## 222 - Needs-based assessment of twice-exceptional gifted students: The S&W-Heuristic

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### Abstract

Misdiagnoses and missed diagnoses of gifted students with co-occurring learning-, developmental and behavioural disorders are often mentioned in literature and practice. Consequently, 2E-students often fall between two stools when it comes to appropriate psycho-educational interventions. In this presentation, we will demonstrate how the Strengths and Weaknesses Heuristic (S&W-Heuristic) can be of added value in case of assessments of (supposed) gifted or 2E-students. This S&W-Heuristic was developed to assess students with (suspicion of) the co-occurrence of giftedness and autism in a needs-based way. Subsequently it was made applicable to students with (suspicion of) 2E in general. The systematicity of the S&W-Heuristic may help psychologists and remedial educationalists to reveal hitherto camouflaged strengths or weaknesses in underachieving smart students and to understand their contradictory psycho-educational needs. By shifting our mindset from a “classification-based” to a dynamic “dimensional-based” operational definition of 2E, camouflaged talent will be recognised and get more opportunity to flourish.

### **Summary**

#### **Background**

Up to now, there are no evidence-based methods available regarding diagnostics and assessments of (suspected) twice-exceptional students, as these subjects have never been thoroughly researched. Meanwhile, in education and mental health care, psychologists and remedial educationalists experience a growing need for clear guidelines.

#### **Aims**

We aimed to design a method for psychologists and remedial educationalists to fill this gap. This became the Strengths and Weaknesses Heuristic (S&W-Heuristic).

#### **Methods**

The S&W-Heuristic was originally designed in 2011 for the needs-based assessment of students with (the suspicion of) intellectual giftedness in co-occurrence with autism, by means of a systematic literature search. After that, the model was disseminated through post-master courses for psychologists and remedial educationalists who were working in clinical and/or educational practice. In the last few years, the S&W-Heuristic has been further developed for needs-based assessments of twice-exceptional students in general, based on practical experience, feedback from the users, and advanced theoretical insights. The later stems especially from our systematic literature study on facts and myths regarding twice-exceptional gifted students. Our method can best be described as design research, based on a combination of scientifically grounded and practice-based advanced insights.

#### **Results**

The systematicity of the S&W-Heuristic builds on three pillars: (1) awareness and reduction of bias, that is one-sidedness in presuppositions, beliefs and mindset; (2) thinking and assessing systematically along the lines of the relevant (neuro)cognitive and non-cognitive dimensions, from intake stage to evaluation stage; (3) adaptation of interventions in an integrated way to both the strong and weak developmental levels of individual 2E students, to the extent necessary in their specific individual education and home situation.

### **Conclusions**

So far, the S&W-Heuristic has generally been enthusiastically received by professionals in clinical and educational practice. The systematic procedure helps psychologists, remedial educationalists and other professionals to focus less on diagnostic labels and to tailor assessments more adequately to the psychoeducational needs of the students. It helps to reveal hitherto camouflaged strengths and/or weaknesses. Moreover, it can be used as an instrument for psycho-education to parents, teachers and the student due to the quick visual overview of the strengths and weaknesses and the alignment with the associated psychoeducational needs. The implementation takes, however, time and it appears to be necessary for professionals to take a course before the S&W-Heuristic can be used adequately. The design of the S&W-Heuristic needs to be further researched and optimised in the future.