

HOW TO DESIGN A QUESTIONNAIRE – A small guideline

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01/user_files/Hofmann/SS08/erstellungvonfragebogen.pdf

Some introductory remarks:

When answering a questionnaire, people tend to please and to answer in social norms. We must be aware of the following tendencies:

- ♣ The tendency to “social desire”
 - ♣ “yes” tendency
 - ♣ “no” tendency
 - ♣ “indecision” tendency
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- “Social desire” means the tendency of people to answer a question so that the answer meets expected social standards.
 - “yes”, “no” tendency means that if you have started answering a number of questions with “yes” or “no”, you will continue with that “automatically” in the next questions
 - “indecision” tendency means that you tick off the central possibility if you have got an odd number of options (5 or 7)

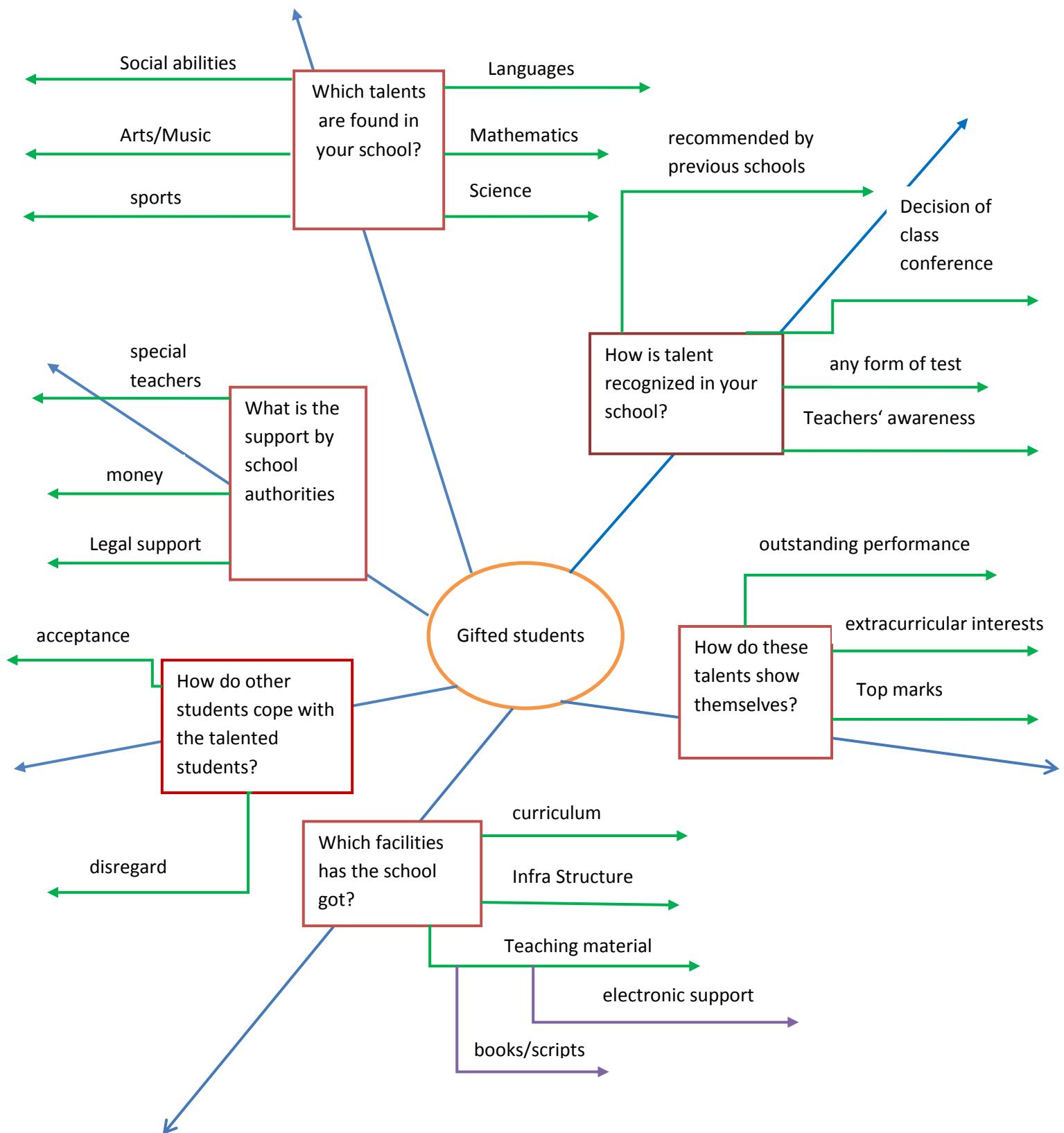
How to start work (1st step):

A good help to get into the topic and to find a structure is

“Mind Mapping”

- ♣ Formulate your questions clearly and precisely
- ♣ Formulate “open” questions
- ♣ Start with the “aim” in the centre
- ♣ Insert **branches** with the main aspects of the topic (in the form of questions)
- ♣ Fix in **side arms** with the fields that fit into the question
- ♣ Draw **twigs** with more details
- ♣ Be careful, especially with the main branches
- ♣ Try to get a comprehensive collection of aspects

EXAMPLE:



How to start the questionnaire? (2nd step)

Explorative interviews should be made in the run-up of the questionnaire. Aim is to find out if the questions that are on the main branches are really important for the topic.

Explorative interviews:

- ♣ teachers, students – practical side;
- ♣ experts – abstract side

It's sufficient to ask the interviewee in an **open phrasing** about a personal experience in connection with the topic. Just follow the conversation (by affirmation and listening) to find out the key aspects and possible unexpected aspects.

Basics for an explorative questionnaire:

- ♣ Give a clear introduction to present the questionnaire
- ♣ Collect the “hard facts”
- ♣ Each interviewee should have the same surroundings
- ♣ Ask for different aspects in different questions (no “and” questions)
- ♣ Stay critical towards your own tools
- ♣ Can the question provide for the information I want to have?
- ♣ Follow the “funnel principle” (more general questions first, more personal ones and more technical ones towards the end of a topic)

Consequently we have to try:

- ♣ Phrasing of the questions should be neutral (no evaluation – socially wished for answers)
- ♣ Avoid frame-conditions that produce socially wished for answers
- ♣ We are driven by the urge to please, so socially wished for answers happen anyway
- ♣ Formulate the questions sometimes positive, sometimes negative
 - “Are you satisfied with the extra-curricular activities this school offers?”
 - “Would you like a change with the extra-curricular activities of this school?”

The Instruction (preliminary text) of the questionnaire should contain:

- ♣ Briefly present yourself
- ♣ Short information about the aim of the interrogation
- ♣ A note that you need serious data and reasonable answers
- ♣ Ascertain that there is no “right” or “wrong” answer
- ♣ Assure that there is complete anonymity
- ♣ Thank the interrogated person

Basically there are “open” and “closed” questions

- ♣ **Open Questions** are answered by a self-formulated text (more difficult to plot)
- ♣ **Closed Questions** are those where you tick off or fill in numbers (no self-chosen words)
- ♣ **Mixed Questions** are questions that contain possible Answers but additionally an open category like e.g.: “others”
(e.g. you ask for different kinds of talents, you probably forget some that might be in one or the other school)

Answering Formats:

★ Degree of Consent:

Do you feel supported by the Ministry of Education in your “Talent Project”?

yes rather yes no rather no

★ Verbal „Anchors“ or „Labels“

A 5-step rating-scale is advised:

- ♣ Frequency:
Never – seldom – occasionally – often – always
- ♣ Intensity:
Never – barely – mediocre – rather strong – extraordinary strong
- ♣ Plausibility:
By no means – probably not – perhaps – rather possible – certainly
- ♣ Rating of statements:
Totally wrong – rather wrong – undecided – rather true – absolutely true

Questions should either be formulated as „true questions“ (Do you think that ...)

Or as “statements of approval (I think that ...)”

Tips to formulate questions

- ♣ Formulate simple and precise questions
- ♣ Formulate your questions as neutrally as possible
- ♣ No complicated sentences,
- ♣ No double negative questions
- ♣ If you use special terms, make sure they are known by everybody
- ♣ Introduce **one** content in **one** question (not: “would you like a study room in your school because you have none?”) –That’s too much in a question; you have to separate these aspects.

You could try the following format:

"Would you like to have the following facilities in your school and have you got them?"

	I'd like to have	I'd not like to have	Is available	Is not available	I don't know
Study Room					
Recreation Spot					
Computer Room					
Library					
Fitness Room					
Sports facilities					

- ♣ List all options possible
- ♣ The possibilities for answers should be clear-cut and not overlapping

The following aspects are important:

- ♣ Are all the questions understandable?
- ♣ Are the answer categories clear?
- ♣ Is the layout suitable?
- ♣ Is the questionnaire too long or tiring in some domains?
- ♣ Is there sufficient room to answer the open questions?
- ♣ Do you feel pushed in a certain direction?
- ♣ How long did it take you to fill in the questionnaire?
- ♣ When you have the results from that explorative questionnaire, you adapt it.
- ♣ For evaluation you also can use answers from the explorative questionnaire.