

**Hanna David**

## **Should We Continue to Use the Term “Giftedness”? YES<sup>1</sup>**

The short answer to the question of whether we should continue to use the term “giftedness” is, in my opinion, “yes.” The following are some of the main educational, psychological, social, political, and practical reasons for this firm opinion.

### **1. Is the term “gifted” “broken”? Does it need to be fixed?**

“Gifted” and “giftedness” are terms needed for practical reasons. The first is an adjective and the second a noun, and any other use of them—such as a reason for denying others their legal, moral, or ethical rights, should be “taken off the table.” Although it had been documented by several scholars that the term has in fact been used to offend and exclude, in my opinion, “giftedness” is a well-known, non-offensive word used by people all over the world. “Giftedness” has a similar meaning in various cultures. It is understood in multiple spoken languages as well as in professional, written texts (e.g., David, 2016). Replacing “giftedness” with another term might cause confusion, create vagueness, and make the exchange of scientific work and findings much more complicated than it is at present. As a result, the efficient support of high-ability children and youths, whether they are classified as “gifted” or not, may be jeopardized.

Furthermore, phenomena do not disappear simply because the words to describe them do. People will remain gifted regardless of what we call them. When referring to adults whose special achievements have been recognized as such in the culture to which they belong, the word “gifted” is suitable for describing an extraordinary actress or a Nobel-prize winner. As for the use of “gifted,” when referring to children, the main argument for replacing it has been that when some children are identified as “gifted,” those who are not

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<sup>1</sup> Written for the special issue of *Gifted Education International* (Eds. Robert J. Sternberg and Ophélie A. Desmet): Terminological Controversies in Gifted Education.

defined as such might be offended. This argument is, in my opinion, not strong enough, as if we replace “gifted” with some other term, it will still be valid; it is not the signifier that might be insulting but, rather, the signified. Many words have been replaced because of negative linguistic connotations rooted in the history or culture in which they thrived, such as, for example, “handicap” (Trépanier, 2013); “gifted/ness” has no such connotation, as it is a derivation of “to give.”

## **2. Some pros and cons of the “gifted” label**

As the identification of giftedness has been practiced in many countries for decades, an enormous number of children, and many more adults, have already received the “gifted” label. A continuous lively discussion about the pros and cons of various identification processes has been going on for some time, some based on very large samples (e.g., Harder, et al., 2014). Research derived from these samples has clarified that the “gifted” label, once given, becomes a part of the person’s identity (see, for example, Alisat, & Bohac Clarke, 2017). Withdrawing an important part of a person’s identity might lead to a variety of negative consequences, especially because most of the subjects who will have to get used to “not being identified as gifted” are still young, and their self-identity has not yet been consolidated.

In addition, there is evidence that the gifted label might help many gifted children and youths, especially the twice-exceptional and those with different cultural, ethnic, religious, and financial backgrounds (e.g. Smilansky & Nevo, 1979). Identification as gifted contributes to such children regaining their self-confidence and faith in their own abilities as well as rebuilding their future aspirations. Twice-exceptional children usually use the “gifted” label as a tool for identity and academic advancement. Unfortunately, I have not come across any quantitative research dealing with this issue, but time and again, I have witnessed how children with ADHD, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, OCD, ODD, social anxiety, and,

especially, Asperger's, benefit, both emotionally and academically, when receiving the "gifted" label.

As for the issue of inequity—the notion that when some children are labeled as "gifted," those unlabeled do not get equal opportunities—this argument has been one of the main reasons that many countries have decided against a public identification system or support for the gifted. However, such decisions must not be related to the "gifted" term. They should be closely connected to educational policy, which is usually supported by the public. For example, Finland, whose students had been scoring at the top of the educational ladder, did not support its gifted for many years but focused, rather, both financially and educationally, on training excellent teachers who made it unnecessary, according to the belief of both the Finn public and policy makers, to provide or even offer special education for its gifted. Israel, on the other hand, started its "Boarding schools for the disadvantaged gifted" project in the late 1960s to early 1970s, targeting children from underprivileged backgrounds. Although most of the children chosen for these schools had not qualified for the label "gifted" used at that time in Israel, namely, scoring at the 98.5 percentile in a valid intelligence test, they were all the best or second-best students in their original classes. As a result, learning in these special classes was a very successful tool for achieving social and financial equality in Israel. Many of these graduates became leaders, scientists, inventors, politicians, etc. Thus, in the Israeli case, *the "gifted" label was an effective tool for transforming society into a more equal opportunities playground.*

The argument against labeling is often accompanied by the assumption that labeling one student as "good" or "excellent," for example, will lead to their peers feeling insulted or thinking that they are not good or "good enough" (e.g., Post, 2013). To the best of my knowledge, there is no research confirming the hypothesis that children who are not identified as gifted are badly affected by the fact that some of their peers are. However, there

is considerable evidence for the opposite assumption, namely, that the “gifted” label badly affects those who receive it (e.g., Cross, 2005). Theoretically, there is a potential harm in not being labeled as gifted, but this potential is influenced by many dependent and independent variables. For example, who are those “other kids?” Are ALL of them expected to be affected? Are they badly affected? If so, will the intensity of the effect be the same for all of them? All these questions make the one asked by Post (2013), “How would this affect the kids who aren't identified as gifted?” like solving a single equation with more than one variable; there could be infinite solutions.

For those who claim that “everybody is gifted” (e.g., Post, 2013), if this discussion examines whether to replace the term “giftedness” by another one, any alternative term will not end the argument.

### **3. “Giftedness” or its translation is successfully used in many language families.**

#### **What are the potential advantages of replacing it?**

The development of any “living” language is closely connected to its traditions and roots— oral, written, or both. “*Gifted*, in fact, comes from *gift* and its Old Norse root, *gípt* or *gíft*, which means both “gift” and “good luck.” As such (e.g., David, 2016), the English word “giftedness” and its variations (e.g., gift/s, gifted) has been well understood and used and is easy to connect to “giving” and “gift/present” in translations to many languages belonging to the Semitic, Germanic, Slavic, and Latin families, and there is no certainty that a substitute word that can “pass” as well in all these languages is to be found.

As for the negative feelings that the term “gifted/ness” might evoke in many people, this subject has been widely discussed with little agreement. Almost 30 years ago, I was asked by a teacher with 40 years of experience who took the in-training college class, “The gifted child in the regular class,” with me to replace the word “gifted” with another one during our next class, as she “could not stand the word ‘gifted.’” I agreed and did so for our

90-minute class the following week. However, during the recess after the class, she approached me and said, “It was stupid of me. You may use the term ‘gifted’ again. I realized it was not ‘the word’ that bothered me but, rather, the feelings I had toward my older gifted brother, who I envied throughout my childhood.” Trépanier (2013) has suggested a theoretical frame explaining not only the described incident, but also explaining the conflict between the need to use a well-accepted non-offensive word while knowing it might evoke negative feelings

No matter which word we use to label or reference our children – “high-ability,” “exceptional,” “bright,” or “talented” – they all can clearly evoke an air of elitism, and this in turn can bring out negative feelings [...] (ibid.).

In addition, practical reasons for any change must include certain components. For example, is the suggested change going to achieve the expected results, or, at least, are the prospects of achieving the desired results high enough to make a decision in favor of the suggested change? Or will the suggested change be embraced by the whole community, and if not, will a large enough part of it or a certain part be accepted? Before these questions can be answered, one must ask whether *another term has been suggested that can replace “giftedness”*. As long as there is no alternative term that is accepted by any of the communities involved, what good can result from “throwing away” a useful term?

Even if an alternative word for giftedness is to be found, which is questionable, *there is no guarantee that the new term will not quickly become exhausted*. What should be expected to occur when the new term is exhausted? If this happens, do we change it again? And then again?

“Giftedness,” like any term, is subject to perception changes, as has been the case with “nerd” and “geek.” Both were used as unflattering substitutes for “gifted.” As Cross (2005) noted. But less than two decades later, as Cross (ibid.) mentioned, with the rapid

development of technology, these two words became positive adjectives implying high abilities as well as potential financial success. This change has also influenced both public view and popular culture worldwide.

#### **4. Changing a term is often perceived as a substitute for a needed substantial change.**

##### **What are the essential needed changes?**

Substituting a new term for “giftedness” might contribute to the illusion that a change has been made in educational or counseling policy regarding the nurturing of gifted children. In my opinion, the attitude toward gifted children and giftedness, in general, should be changed, and the psychological needs of gifted children should be recognized and supported. However, changing the term “gifted” will not benefit the gifted. It might give the impression that something is being done to meet these children’s needs, but this impression has the potential to cause more harm than good, as it could strengthen the belief that a real change has occurred in the attitude toward the gifted, or in the support they receive.

When we agree that moving forward in the field of gifted education does not necessarily require changing the term “gifted/ness,” we return to the present starting point, where improving the situation starts with the identification-as-gifted process. However, there is no one, absolute, widely accepted definition of “giftedness.” All trials to achieve agreement on such a definition have failed; therefore, the conclusion should be that the first step toward improving the education of the gifted should focus on their needs, instead of any other issue connected to them— linguistic, cultural, or social. I will hereby show how improving the education of ALL gifted is particularly beneficial to the less advantaged from less privileged backgrounds as well as various minority students.

In her chapter “Gifted Education in the Middle East” David (2017) I described six different definitions of giftedness, connected to different public and private ways of supporting the gifted. The argument that “one should first define a term before addressing it”

has already been refuted many times (e.g. Rowe, 1992); therefore, there is no point in holding on to the belief that “giftedness must first be defined.”

The most typical identification-for-giftedness system relies on IQ tests. However, there are at least 10 different such systems. For example, in many American and European countries, the cutoff point of such tests is IQ = 130. However, in the United States both the Raven’s Progressive Matrices test and the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test have been widely used. Lebanon has adopted the DISCOVER identification-for-giftedness system (Sarouphim-McGill, 2015), also used to nurture the gifted. Hong Kong’s system uses three criteria, only one of which is verbal (Chan, 2000).

Israel has used its identification-for-giftedness system to help many students climb to high educational, scientific, artistic, social, and financial levels, despite their meager human capital. For example, until the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this track has been in the service of affirmative action favoring minorities, especially Arabs and all children in the geographical and social periphery. While entitlement to the special gifted programs in the periphery has been granted to up to 8% of the *local* population, it was granted only to 1.5% of the population in the center of Israel. While the “entrance ticket” to the Bedouin program for the gifted was, at that time, a score of IQ > 125 on the Arab version of the Wechsler test, some Jewish children living in cities with high socio-economic status were not accepted to such programs, although their score was in the 99% percentile.

Another, not yet applied way to “go forward” in the field of giftedness is, in my opinion, focused more on the psychology of the gifted. Experts in gifted education are traditionally divided into educators and psychologists, yet when faced with the need to challenge the gifted and help them overcome their emotional and social problems, one should be an expert in both areas. Adults who have materialized their potential, being identified as gifted or not, share a common denominator: stable, well-built mental health. Any educational

program offered to those identified as gifted is better at materializing their gifts when they are well-rounded, socially and emotionally successful individuals.

An additional way to move forward is to “open the gates” to high-level studies, an accelerated pace of learning, and the choice to take a heavy load in various subjects, which can be offered to everyone who is interested. Those who are up to it will not need the “gifted” label but, rather, prove they are entitled to better education by “making it.” High motivation, persistence, and interest should be sufficient to gain access to better education. Anybody who is “up to it” should be welcome.

An additional way to move forward is to enable each student who presents a high level of mathematical or verbal ability while excelling in any other area, but who has learning disabilities or emotional problems, to get the help they need, rather than to oblige them to carry the “gifted” label as an extra load. We must ensure that their giftedness does not mask their difficulties.

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I have submitted this version of my work to *Gifted Education International* **after** being asked to shorten my 3,500-word previous version; since then I went through 4 additional circles of changes/corrections/suggestions of or re-submission. After the first circle (3/10/21) reviewer 1 decided that my work should be accepted, but reviewer 2 was asking for more and more changes and additions. I Then wrote to the editor:

I am glad that the first reviewer stated that "this paper is publishable as is".

The gaps between the reviewers seem too large and thus I do not see how the response can be both published with no changes (even if the author's opinion contradicts that of the reviewer), AND at the same time needs practically re-writing, as reviewer 2 thinks.

I hereby attach the last correspondence between me and reviewer 2, along with some explanations. I shall willingly send any previous version of this very long correspondence to whoever is interested.

## **Hanna David & "reviewer 2": The last correspondence on *Should We Continue to Use the Term "Giftedness"?* YES**

### **Reviewer: 2**

#### **Comments to the Author**

Thank you to the author for including their response to my comments this time around.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Expanded summary by Hanna David (the original text will follow):**

Before reading the comments of the reviewer and my detailed answers, please note that:

- I. Reviewer 2 had repeated my lack of dealing with "conceptions of giftedness" no less than 11 times. They added that "I should be aware of/learn about conceptions of giftedness". I have never seen any review that implies that the author should close gaps in their education.

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<sup>2</sup> This is the exact citation.

- II. Reviewer 2 asked me repeatedly to "correct my English", giving one example where I was citing according to APA6 rules rather than APA7. That was corrected, of course, and I thanked the reviewer for noticing it. Since then I was waiting in vain for further faults they found in "my English".
- III. Time and again I clarified that my article could not have been BOTH "publishable as it is", as reviewer 1 wrote, AND unfit for publishing, as reviewer 2 decided. Needless to mention that I received no answer, but was rather advised: NOT TO USE CAPITALS. The reason for my "refusal" to "accept this advice" was explained, but the demand remained as it was.
- IV. Reviewer 2 wrote that my work had "potential". I cannot recall such a patronizing attitude during my almost 50-year career as a teacher, researcher, and counselor. Neither can I recall that I have used such a patronizing attitude when speaking with any student or even a 5-year old patient.
- V. It seems that reviewer 2 has asked ME to widen their horizons, to enrich my knowledge. They write:

If you personally use 30 definitions, I also question why we should keep using the term if it has that many meanings. If giftedness (in the context of gifted education) has so many meanings, should we consider moving forward with a plethora of terms that better acknowledge the needs of individual students? Why do you use 30 different definitions? Please note that this is simply a question and not a necessarily something to be addressed in your manuscript. Given your response, *I just wondered about this and if you had given this any thought* [my italics – H.D.].

Reviewer 2 had made me explain why I use the term "gifted/ness" in a variety of cases (I was giving them detailed examples, at their request, even though they stated that it was not necessary for the article per se; I think that sharing such knowledge with a person who kept threatening me that unless I change my work in THEIR way was generous, but nevertheless I was given no response). I still do not think that reviewer 2 had a right to ask me for explanations that were not to be included in my work; maybe reviewer 2 wanted to learn from me without having to admit that he did and without feeling grateful.

Reviewer 2 is entitled, of course, to "wonder" about my "giving any thought" to anything they consider important, necessary, or well-accepted as unimpeachable in their world. But I have never read such a disrespectful language either in a text written about my work or any other work in the field of giftedness. Here are some additional examples

I am concerned that you are conflating the inequity issues with the idea that labeling one person as good is not going to hurt others.<sup>3</sup> Please review the literature on equity issues in gifted education to more accurately reflect on this argument

[...] it seems that you are not acknowledging that there is already no community support and many issues with the term.

VI. Reviewer 2 seems to be somewhat unaware of the fact that there are language families. In their critique they write: "If you meant that linguistically many languages use the word giftedness as derived from its Latin meaning this should be clarified". I indeed "clarified" this point, but by this demand the reviewer has shown their linguistic limitation as well as their disability to understand a "simple" sentence. I NEVER claimed that "linguistically many languages use the word giftedness as derived from its Latin meaning". I did not even claim that there was a "Latin meaning" and I still do not, whatever this means. I "simply" showed that in four language families, INCLUDING the Romance family (sometimes called Latin, Romanic, or Neo-Latin) – the examples I gave have been Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian), the term used for "gifted/ness" has the same root. Furthermore, I showed that in 21 languages (belonging to these 4 "families", "gifted/ness" have either the same- or similar root.

VII. Reviewer 2 had already claimed that in order to discuss the term "gifted/ness" one has to define it. I had explained, time and again, with Wittgenstein as my aid, that philosophy has already dealt with this issue, and came to a different conclusion. Obviously this has not persuaded reviewer 2 who urged me again to define "gifted/ness". Thus, I had explained, again, that

[...] there is no one, accepted-by-all definition for "game". But there is one "rule" that helps us decide whether "something" is a game or not. If the noun (concrete or abstract) we are talking about has one characteristic common to another "thing" (noun) that is already accepted as a "game"– it can be defined as a "game" as well. Thus, it is not just that if football is a game basket-ball is a game too, but badminton is also a game, even though "ball" is not a part of its name (I am not getting into the differences between a game and a play at this point). But chess-game, where a ball is not a part of is also a game according to this definition – it includes the "competitiveness" characteristic, which is a part of football, which is agreed to be defined as a "game".

Reviewer 2 just ignored my very-detailed explanation (which was necessary after learning that they had not read Wittgenstein neither had been familiar with the very

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that I have not "labeled one person as good". Citing Post (2013) incorrectly is just another example of misreading my article by reviewer 2.

common concept of "defining a game"), which is, again, quite uncommon in the scientific world.

- VIII. Reviewer 2 explained that different reviewers can come to different conclusions. This was *their explanation to the non-logical exclamation that my work can be published as it is, as reviewer 1 wrote, and should be rejected unless it is re-written according to the orders of reviewer 2*. I used the same argument, namely, that reviewer 2 and I might agree to disagree. This exclamation has not been answered; it was much easier to reject my work. In my opinion such disrespect is quite amazing.
- IX. Reviewer 2 used the word "simply" 8 times, telling me "what to do". I "simply" urge them not to do it in the future, as their identity might be disclosed and they would "simply" be denounced...
- X. I "simply" "refused" to do as reviewer 2 "asked", as I do not take orders from anybody. To the best of my knowledge, I was not asked to make changes, but rather ordered to if I wanted my article to be published.
- XI. "[...] you unfortunately missed the point of my feedback". [...] "Although I understand that this may be frustrating at times, I urge you to carefully consider my comments none the less" and so on. Such an undermining, even degrading language, should be, in my opinion, avoided in general, and in scientific critic in particular.
- XII. I do not think that the patronizing attitude of reviewer 2 should be accepted. As there are too many examples of it – here are just two examples: wrote:
- [...] this seems to be an outdated representation of identification processes, especially for the USA. Multiple criteria are the norm most US states.
- Multiple criteria are the norm most US states" [the "bad English" is of reviewer 2, who insists that I "[...] carefully edit the English".
- it seems that you are not acknowledging that there is already no community support and many issues with the term, so it may not be that useful.
- XIII. Reviewer 2 writes: "Multiple criteria are the norm most US states". Was my article not to be published in *Gifted Education* **INTERNATIONAL**?
- XIV. Time and again I explained that due to the word limit of this work (2000, I got "special permission" from Prof. Sak, the editor of GEI, to add 500 words to this limit, but was strictly "forbidden" to add more items to my 10-reference list). Thus I could not supply the explanations that reviewer 2 needed in order to understand my work. Unfortunately, reviewer 2 was not familiar with so many of the mentioned conceptions, terms and references I mentioned (e.g. their question: what is DISCOVER? The answer could

have been easily found in the Sarouphim-McGill [2015] reference...). As reviewer 2 did not find the answers to his questions, stemmed from their unfamiliarity with my terms, sources, or, as they implied – other-than-American conceptions-, ideas about-, attitudes, and policies regarding gifted education, I have supplied reviewer 2 the answers they needed in my ~4000-word letter to them (see below).

- XV. I am still puzzled by the question: does it make sense, that a reviewer urges an author to exceed the word limit of a work? How can they do it when the chief editor repeats time and again and the word-limit should not be exceeded?

Here are some recommendations for reviewers of *Gifted Education International*:

1. When being asked to review an article they are not familiar with its content, whether it is many terms, many items from the reference list or anything else, it makes more sense to say: "this is beyond my field of expertise" than expose one's lack of knowledge, such as has been revealed by mixing family languages with languages, referring to "Latin" as to a spoken, modern language, or being unfamiliar with basics of philosophy.
2. Wide horizons are always recommended, but when one presents themselves as an expert of giftedness – it is necessary.
3. Using the power of "the reviewer" in order to leave a legitimate argument in its middle and preferring to reject the manuscript instead is a sign of weakness. I would like to hope that this is not the norm among scholars and educators in the field of giftedness.

Here is the full text of my last correspondence with reviewer 2.

**Reviewer 2:**

1. Reviewers disagree often. Which is why we typically have more than one person review your work. Although I understand that this may be frustrating at times, I urge you to carefully consider my comments none the less. If you took my comments to mean you have to re-write your manuscript, you unfortunately missed the point of my feedback. I simply offer suggestions to present your arguments with more clarity and with consideration of all sides. Also, please refrain from using capitalized words in your response to reviewers as it can easily be misinterpreted as "shouting" in written language and that would simply be unnecessary.

**Author:**

Thanks for explaining that "Reviewers disagree often". Please note that my argument was, and still is, that it is not possible to publish my work "as it is" and publish it with many substantial changes.

I still think that changing my work in accordance with your comments means re-writing it, as it is impossible to clarify, explain, give more examples, etc. within the 2000-word limit (and ten items in the reference list). The first version of my work, that was 3500-word long (+23 items in the reference list) did not include even half of the content of my last draft, which I had cut by 50%. Nevertheless, after my first submission I was asked to shorten my work so it should have included a maximum of 2500 words and just 10 items in the reference list (the given number "10" for the reference-number was non-negotiable). I am indeed very sorry because you feel that "unfortunately I missed the point of your feedback".

As for capitalizing words – I have never heard about the policy of not doing that. I do feel that in some occasions shouts are ok; maybe even recommended. I understand that you do not like them, so let us agree that we disagree about "shouting" (by using capital letters). If capital letters are "forbidden" according to any rule – please, inform me about this rule, and I will happily obey to it. If there are neither rules nor laws against it – I think I deserve the right of shouting, even when other people – not just you – find it distasteful or worse.

**Reviewer 2:**

2. To use a term without meaning does not make sense to me. So, your comment that conception of giftedness is not the subject of your paper, confuses me. How can you argue for the continued use of a term without defining it? In the paper you mention "high-ability" is that what the term giftedness should imply? If so, high ability in what area? It should be clarified.

**Author:**

I never recommended "To use a term without meaning".

Please read Wittgenstein about definitions (I did mention his work in my text!).

In addition – let me give you an example (which is obviously not mine, but I can't add it + its source to the text due to the word limit): there is no one, accepted-by-all definition for "game". But there is one "rule" that helps us decide whether "something" is a game or not. If the noun (concrete or abstract) we are talking about has one characteristic common to another "thing" (noun) that is already accepted as a "game"– it can be defined as a "game" as well. Thus, it is not just that if football is a game basket-ball is a game too, but badminton is also a game, even though "ball" is not a part of its name (I am not getting into the differences between a game and a play at this point). But chess-game, where a ball is not a part of is also a game according to this definition – it includes the "competitiveness" characteristic, which is a part of football, which is agreed to be defined as a "game".

**Reviewer 2:**

3. Point 1: I agree with your point that changing the term may do nothing and even if I did not agree, my agreement is irrelevant. My first point of feedback was for you to



acknowledge that although you may be of the opinion that it is a non-offensive term, it has been documented by several scholars that the term has in fact been used to offend and exclude. A simple acknowledgement of this history is relevant to your discussion.

**Author:**

I added the "yellow sentence":

Although it had been documented by several scholars that the term has in fact been used to offend and exclude, in my opinion, "giftedness" is a well-known, non-offensive word used by people all over the world.

**Reviewer 2:**

4. Point 2: Then please clarify this in the text. As it is written, I took it to mean that across cultures there are similar conceptions of giftedness. This is not accurate. If you meant that linguistically many languages use the word giftedness as derived from its Latin meaning this should be clarified. Please keep in mind if I misinterpret the meaning, so may other readers. Therefore, my intention is simply to help you clarify your argument.<sup>4</sup>

**Author:**

Here is the clarification – referring not to not just to Latin languages but to Semitic, Slavic and Germanic languages as well (as clarified in my work):

**BREF RÉSUMÉ DE LA TERMINOLOGIE LINGUISTIQUE CORRESPONDANT AU TERME «GIFTED»**

Voici un bref résumé de la terminologie en usage pour «**gifted**», «**giftedness**» et «**gifted education**» dans les quatre principales familles de langues: sémitique, germanique, romane et slave. Pour chaque «famille», seules sont retenues les langues qui ont utilisé un équivalent de «**gifted**» dans ses écrits et/ou qui sont parlées dans un pays où l'enseignement pour élèves hp est pratiqué.

Je suis parfaitement consciente que l'Asie du sud-est, où l'éducation des plus aptes est pratiquée depuis des milliers d'années, n'est pas incluse dans cette discussion. La raison de cette omission – à part la limite de 15 pages à laquelle je suis tenue de me plier – est que, lorsque l'on discute linguistiquement aussi bien que culturellement la plus grande de ces cultures, la chinoise par exemple, le point principal est que l'accent est mis toujours sur l'effort et la persévérance plutôt que sur le talent «naturel» ou le «don» (David and Wu, 2009, 2012).

Dans quelques-uns des pays où les langues ci-dessus sont parlées, il n'y a pas formellement ou officiellement d'enseignement pour élèves hp, si bien qu'il n'y pas de terme accepté pour cette notion. Dans ces cas, j'ai juste mentionné le mot employé pour «**gifted**».

## 1. LES LANGUES SÉMITIQUES : ARABE ET HÉBREU

Les langues sémitiques les plus largement parlées aujourd'hui sont l'arabe, l'amharique, le tigrinya, l'hébreu, l'araméen et le maltais. La littérature dans le domaine du haut potentiel

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<sup>4</sup> As access to the English version is limited, I could not have bought it here. However, I urge anybody who is interested to write to me in order to be granted a free access (to the stored copy).



n'existe qu'en hébreu et en arabe, essentiellement parce qu'il n'y a pas d'enseignement des élèves hp dans les pays où sont parlés l'amharique et le tigrinya. Pendant de nombreuses années, l'araméen a été une lingua franca parlée par des populations variées et a été le langage écrit des juifs, des chrétiens et des gnostiques pour leurs écritures religieuses, liturgiques et littéraires; mais aujourd'hui, c'est la langue maternelle de communautés dispersées, restreintes et généralement isolées et elle est considérée comme en danger; le maltais est encore parlé à Malte, mais l'anglais est la langue utilisée dans tous les domaines de la communication écrite, de l'éducation et de la culture.

Commençons par une discussion des termes employés comme équivalents de «**gifted**» en arabe et en hébreu ainsi que par une anecdote tirée du Talmud babylonien, texte central du judaïsme rabbinique écrit en araméen.

### **Haut potentiel dans le monde arabe:**

Dans la plus grande partie du monde arabe, le terme pour élèves hp est «**Mawhubeen**», venant de l'adjectif «**mawhūb**», et est utilisé – tout comme en hébreu – à la fois pour les enfants et pour les artistes virtuoses de haut niveau, principalement dans le domaine musical. Le ministère de l'Education d'Oman a décidé de recourir au mot «**Mujedeen**» signifiant glorieux. Ce terme est spécifique à Oman et implique non seulement de grandes capacités mais aussi beaucoup de respect et de grands espoirs de futurs accomplissements (Al-Lawati, 2013). Ce qui frappe et donne à réfléchir est le fait que l'éducation pour élèves hp à Oman n'est pas très développée en dépit de l'attitude très positive que reflète bien le mot qui la décrit (David, 2017).

### **Haut potentiel en hébreu [et araméen]:**

Les langues sémitiques ont des racines qui ne sont pas des syllabes ou des mots, mais plutôt des groupes de consonnes, habituellement au nombre de trois. Dans certains cas, deux de ces consonnes sont identiques, avec pour conséquence le fait que certains des mots construits sur ces racines apparaissent avec seulement deux des consonnes racines ; l'une des double consonnes est omise. De nombreux mots sont composés à partir de ces racines en plaçant les voyelles *entre* les consonnes racines. Ainsi, l'adjectif hébreu pour «**gifted**» dans «**ME'HONAN**» (מְהוּנָן),<sup>5</sup> dont la racine à trois consonnes est «**HNN**» (ה.נ.נ.) a la même racine que mon prénom [biblique] Hanna (חַנָּה), par exemple. Littéralement, «**ME'HONAN**» signifie «**a été donné**», et il y existe de nombreux autres prénoms venant de la racine «**HNN**», tels que «**Hanan**», nom masculin en hébreu (חַנּוּן), féminin en arabe (حَنَّان); «**Hanna**» (חַנָּה), qui est masculin en araméen et parfois aussi en hébreu,<sup>6</sup>

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5 Quand la consonnes «**Noon**» (נ, qui sonne comme “n”) apparaît à la fin du mot, il devient «**Noon final**» (ן).

6 Par exemple: feu l'écrivain, critique littéraire, journaliste, rédacteur en chef, éditeur, et publicitaire Yehoshua Chone Rabnitzki / Rawnitzki, Yehoshua Hana (חַנָּה) (1859-1944) et feu le chercheur yiddish Chone (חַנָּה) Shmeruk (1921-1997), Rav Hanna (חַנָּה) bar Bizna et Rabba bar Bar Hanna (חַנָּה) – les grands érudits Talmudiques de Babylone.

« Hen » (חן) – signifiant beauté en hébreu – et d'autres encore. Le dénominateur commun de ces noms est leur signification: un don qui a été fait à une certaine personne.

En Israël, un terme spécial – « à très haut potentiel » – a été inventé par le ministère de l'Education pour les étudiants hp que l'on s'attend à voir recevoir un futur prix Nobel (David, 2012a). Je recommande vivement d'éviter d'utiliser de tels termes car non seulement ils établissent une présomption que le haut potentiel est une qualité permanente « donnée » par la nature (ou Dieu, ou Allah, ou Bouddha), mais aussi encouragent et favorisent la vanité, l'arrogance et par conséquent la paresse de la personne qui est appelée « surdouée ».

## 2. LES LANGUES GERMANIQUES<sup>7</sup>

a. Haut potentiel dans les langues germaniques occidentales: anglais, allemand, néerlandais et afrikaans, un dérivé du néerlandais. Dans ces quatre langues germaniques, le mot utilisé pour « haut potentiel » vient du latin, racine de « donnant/donner/a été donné/don ».

### **Haut potentiel en anglais:**

« **Gifted** » est employé en anglais à la fois pour caractériser les enfants précoces qui ont atteint certains stades de développement plus tôt que leurs pairs, ceux qui ont des résultats excellents dans les tests pour personnes hp, et les enfants et adultes qui atteignent un haut niveau de performance dans les arts, la musique et les sports. Il est courant de croire que les seuls domaines principaux dans lesquels les enfants peuvent obtenir des résultats identiques à ceux des adultes sont les mathématiques, les échecs, la musique et, jusqu'à un certain point, les arts visuels (Jenkins, 2005).

### **Haut potentiel en allemand:**

« **Begabtenförderung** » signifie « encouragement/soutien/promotion/aider les personnes hp ». Le mot allemand « **Bildung** » (éducation) n'est pas employé, comme dans beaucoup d'autres langages, dans le contexte du haut potentiel. L'idéologie qui a probablement entraîné ce choix est que le haut potentiel est lié à la connaissance; les enfants hp devraient être aidés à acquérir plus de connaissances à un rythme plus rapide. A la différence de beaucoup de pays anglophones, « **Sonderpädagogik** » – l'éducation spéciale – vise seulement les enfants connaissant des difficultés, et les enfants hp ne sont pas considérés comme faisant partie de ce groupe d'enfants; pourtant, un enfant hp ayant des difficultés d'apprentissage liées à un trouble associé (dyslexie, dyscalculie, etc.), ayant un handicap physique ou connaissant des

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<sup>7</sup> Je n'ai mentionné que quelques langues de chaque branche car la plupart d'entre elles n'ont pas de terminologie pour « haut potentiel » en général et « enseignement pour élèves hp » en particulier.

difficultés émotionnelles, sociales, ou familiales, c'est-à-dire un enfant « doublement exceptionnel », a d'autant plus besoin d'une éducation spéciale.

« **Hochbegabung** » en allemand fait généralement référence aux élèves faisant partie du 97 percentile du point de vue de quotient intellectuel ; aux Etats-Unis, ils seraient appelés juste « **gifted** ».

#### **Haut potentiel en néerlandais:**

Le terme néerlandais pour l'éducation pour élèves hp est « **Onderwijs voor hoogbegaafden** » (voir Curriculum Provision for Exceptionally Able Students, 2010). « **Onderwijs voor Hoogbegaafden** » inclut le concept anglais d'utilisation d'un seul mot, éducation, dans deux sens, liés au comportement et au savoir, ainsi que le concept allemand d'emploi du mot « à très haut potentiel » (**hoogbegaafden**) pour désigner les élèves que l'anglais nommerait simplement « **gifted** ».

#### **Haut potentiel intellectuel en afrikaans:**

Le terme afrikaans pour haut potentiel intellectuel est « **Intellektuele begaafdheid** ». Comme l'Afrique du Sud n'organise pas encore d'enseignement officiel pour les élèves hp (Gifted Children in South Africa, 2013), il n'y a pas besoin de terme afrikaans pour « enseignement hp ».

b. Haut potentiel dans les principales langues germaniques du nord: suédois, norvégien et danois:

#### **Haut potentiel en suédois:**

« **Gifted** » se dit « **begåvad** »; « enseignement pour élèves hp » se dit « **Spetsutbildning** » (**Spetsut** = avancé; **bildning** = formation). Cela est beaucoup plus proche de l'allemand « **Begabtenförderung** » que l'anglais « **gifted education** ». « Haut potentiel intellectuel » se

dit « **Intellektuell särgåvning** » (**begåvning** = capacité, puissance, intelligence, dotation, brillance, aptitude).

### **Haut potentiel en norvégien et danois:**

En norvégien aussi bien qu'en danois, « **gifted** » se dit « begavet », ce qui le rend très semblable au terme suédois venant de « don » ou de « donnant ».

### 3. LES LANGUES ROMANES<sup>8</sup>

**Haut potentiel en français:** les options sont: « haut potentiel, douance, précocité, surdouance, surdouement, surdon, haut quotient intellectuel (HQI ; Très Haut Quotient Intellectuel – THQI – voire TTHQI) » ou « précocité ».

**Haut potentiel en italien:** « **superdotato, plusdotazione intellettiva o iperdotazione cognitiva, alto potenziale cognitivo** ».

**Haut potentiel en espagnol:** «**la dotación intelectual**».

**Enseignement pour élèves hp en portugais:** «**educação para superdotados**».

**Enseignement pour élèves hp en roumain:** «**Educația copiilor supradotați**».

En résumé: ces quatre langages appartenant à la famille romane emploient le sens de « donnant » dans le terme choisi pour « **gifted** » ; cela peut sans doute avoir une forte influence sur le français qui « n'a pas encore décidé » quel terme il préfère.

### 4. LES LANGUES SLAVES

a. Haut potentiel dans le groupe oriental des langues slaves: russe, biélorusse et ukrainien

#### **Haut potentiel en russe :**

Le mot pour décrire le haut potentiel (intellectuel) en russe est «**Одарённость (Odaryennost)**» qui est structurellement semblable au mot anglais « **giftedness** » et qui,

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<sup>8</sup> Les langues romanes sont issues de la langue latine.

comme en anglais, est étroitement connecté à la notion de « don », sans référence à la matérialisation du potentiel.

### **Haut potentiel en biélorusse:**

En biélorusse, « **gifted** » se dit «**адоранасць (adoranast)**», dont la signification est la même qu'en russe. La racine « dor » peut être identifiée, comme en russe « dar ».

### **Haut potentiel en ukrainien:**

« Gifted » en ukrainien se dit «**обдаровані**»; haut potentiel intellectuel se dit «**Обдарованість**»; la signification et la racine sont les mêmes qu'en russe.

b. Haut potentiel dans le groupe occidental des langues slaves: polonais, tchèque et slovaque  
Enseignement pour élèves hp en polonais:

«**Nauczanie** (instruction, tutorat) **dzieci uzdolnionych** (enfants hp)». Le concept anglais de « l'éducation des élèves hp » n'est ni traduit selon le « style américain » qui combine les tâches de l'école – développer le savoir et enseigner le comportement social par « l'éducation » – ni selon le style allemand, qui se focalise sur l'enseignement des élèves hp plutôt que sur l'aide à leur apporter dans d'autres domaines de l'existence que les domaines cognitifs. Le mot polonais « **Nauczanie** » se réfère aux deux aspects puisque sa signification est à la fois « instruction » et « tutorat », alors que le mot polonais pour « **gifted** » a trois traductions possibles: 1. **utalentowany** = talentueux, doué, accompli, capable; 2. **zdolny** =

capable, apte, doué, adéquat, talentueux, intelligent; 3. **uzdolniony** = talentueux, doué, capable, excellent.

### **Haut potentiel en tchèque:**

Enfants hp en tchèque se dit « **nadané** (don, talent) **dítě** (enfants)»; « gifted » se dit «**nadaný**».

### **Haut potentiel en slovaque:**

« **Gifted** » en slovaque se dit «**nadaný**» tout comme en tchèque.

c. Haut potentiel dans le groupe méridional des langues slaves: slovène, serbo-croate, macédonien et bulgare

### **Haut potentiel en slovène:**

« **Gifted** » en slovène se dit « **Nadarjen** ».

### **Haut potentiel en serbo-croate:**

« **Gifted** » en serbo-croate se dit « **Darovit** »

### **Haut potentiel macédonien :**

« **Gifted** » en macédonien se dit «**Надарени**».

### **Haut potentiel en bulgare :**

« **Gifted** » en bulgare se dit «**Надарен**», de façon presque identique au macédonien.

A la lumière de cette longue liste, quel serait le juste choix pour « **giftedness** » en français ?

This "clarification" is 2000-word long; the English translation of this part of the French publication (David, 2016), also published in ResearchGate, is "but" 1366 words. Needless to explain why I cannot further explain the terminological arguments, relied on well over 20 languages belonging to 4 main "families".

### **Reviewer 2:**

5. Point 3: I don't see how we can discuss a concept without defining it, so your argument that conceptions are irrelevant to your discussion does not make sense to me. The call for papers stated:

- Should we even continue to use the term "giftedness"?
- A lot has changed since the original conception of "giftedness" as meaning "highly intelligent." Yet, many educators and researchers continue to overemphasize IQ and related constructs within conceptions of giftedness as well as gifted and talented services. The initial

conception is now a century old and it seems that many aspects of the gifted- education field have been frozen in time. If we continue to use the term, what should it mean in the 21st century, considering the enormous changes in the world and our understanding of the world since those initial conceptions of giftedness in the early 1900s.

- How should gifted identification and education be conducted today, given a century of changes in the world and in what "giftedness" may mean today?

As you can see this special issue address terminological controversies around conceptions of giftedness. Continuing to use a term is part of the discussion, but the call is clearly also oriented toward what it should mean if we do decide to continue using the term.

**Author:**

I do not argue that conceptions of giftedness have been changing during the last century; I never stated that "giftedness should be defined, treated, used or practiced in accordance with what you define as "original conception of 'giftedness'". I have argued that the opposite is indeed the true, supplying but a few examples, chosen randomly in order to show that it is not just one country, or even one continent, that "decides upon rules". I have given 4 different examples as I tried to show that variety of cultures, such as Arab, or South-East-Asian are also a part of the "giftedness world". The reference list limit made me exclude many more example, and by giving a few random examples one can always ask: "why"? – why not other examples? Why an example X, which I, the reviewer, thinks is important, had not been included? "what is so special about the Lebanese identification system"? etc.

**Reviewer 2:**

6. Point 4: Simply changing the verb "create" to a verb such as "extend" "enlarge" "amplify" etc. would acknowledge that there is already vagueness. Simply considering my feedback rather than dispelling it would have saved us both an additional review. I am trying to help you clarify your arguments and the tone of your response is defensive when that is not necessary.

If you personally use 30 definitions, I also question why we should keep using the term if it has that many meanings. If giftedness (in the context of gifted education) has so many meanings, should we consider moving forward with a plethora of terms that better acknowledge the needs of individual students? Why do you use 30 different definitions? Please note that this is simply a question and not a necessarily something to be addressed in your manuscript. Given your response, I just wondered about this and if you had given this any thought.

**Author:**

When I write about giftedness I prefer being clear, and I think that scientific writing would avoid, if only possible, the use of vague conceptions, multiple-meaning words, or substitute terms for well-accepted, functional terms. For example: in order to decide who is to be entitled to public financial support both for contributing to the young person's well-being and supporting their cognitive needs, a definition should be used.

In my other roles I use many times a different definition. For example: when parents notify me that their child "failed" a "giftedness test", I might find, after learning as much as possible

about both the family and the child that the child can be defined as gifted according to one of the following criteria:

- I. A 6-year old bilingual girl took the WISC-V and "failed" the IQ criterion needed in order to be entitled to free gifted education. But when excluding the "similarities" and "vocabulary" sub-tests, it is easy to come to the conclusion that she "deserved" the label "gifted" which gave her access to an enrichment program she needed for her well-being (suitable friends, challenging classes, etc.)
- II. A 15-year old boy struggles to "make it" in many school subjects, but he is a very talented painter. When I tell him that he is a "gifted artist" it contributes to his self-esteem, self-confidence, believability in his own abilities, etc.
- III. The parents of a 12-year old girl complained that their daughter was behaving in a very childish way, in spite of the fact of being an excellent student, a very curious child, and able to understand abstract terms quite easily. I introduced the parents to the definition of giftedness attributed to the late Dr. Landau: "a gifted child is a child who has a large gap between their cognitive and emotional developmental stage". As a result, it was much easier for the parents to understand their child and their relationship improved.

**Reviewer 2:**

7. Point 5: If it is not realistic to address all relevant issue, maybe the author could consider presenting one or more in-depth and nuanced arguments rather than listing many and then blaming the word limit on the lack of clarity. Simply a suggestion, in the end the author can decide.

**Author:**

I have made my decision – let us move forward!

**Reviewer 2:**

However, I do feel that my initial comment remains. If you wish to discuss inequity as part of your discussion it should be more in-depth. Inequity issues go back to issues of systematic discrimination against people of color, people with disabilities, people from low-income families, etc. and has broader implications than those discuss in your text. There are many ways to handle this. For example, changing some of the language you use to clarify that you are not discussing inequity as much as you are addressing the inclusive education argument may already help the reader understand what perspective you are taking. Also, at this point we can be more lenient with the word limit if it will help clarify your argument.

**Author:**

No, we cannot (be more lenient with the word limit). Already explained.

**Reviewer 2:**

8. Point 6: I disagree as discussed in my feedback above. Please carefully consider my



feedback from a perspective of clarification and maybe it will help you see how you can clarify your arguments.

**Author:**

Let us agree to disagree.

**Reviewer 2:**

9. Point 7: Add whatever citations you feel necessary to make your point. At this point adding a few additional references is necessary to clarify your text, so the citation limit should be less strict.

**Author:**

I already explained that I had subtracted 40% of my submitted article due to the editor requirements, as well as 60% of the references.

**Reviewer 2:**

10. Point 8: Isn't this exactly what was already there? Please support these claims with appropriate citations (even if it means going over the allotted amount) and please consider how you can improve the clarity and flow of your arguments. Rather than "In addition" you could state "For example," to indicate the connection between the two sentences.

**Author:**

Done.

**Reviewer 2:**

The second point you highlight is in a different section of your paper, so it is entirely unclear to me how this connects to your point. Please work on the flow of the argument to present a thesis and its appropriate argumentation more clearly.

11. Point 9: please see comment 7

**Author:**

Seen and answered in length.

**Reviewer 2:**

12. Point 10: Once again, please carefully consider my feedback. You are correct that this is an international journal and that we should consider more than the US context. However, most recent research around identification supports the use of multiple criteria.

As to my comment of why you singled out those two examples, it remains. I don't understand why you discuss these two instruments, so please clarify your intentions.

**Author:**

I have considered all your arguments time and again, put a lot of effort (in addition to a 2-digit number of hours...) in order to deal in depth with each point you mentioned. I am sorry that you feel that I do not "consider your feedback"; I have been considering and re-

considering each single point for weeks. I have also come to the conclusion that we think differently about many things, but isn't that the point of all discussions?

**Reviewer 2:**

13. Point 12: I still see citations that list all authors (APA 7 requires immediate use of et al. when there are more than two authors. There are still several grammatical errors as well. So, again, please carefully edit your work before resubmitting it.

**Author**

Thanks for noticing it: was corrected to: (e.g. Harder, et al., 2014).

**Reviewer 2:**

Additional comments:

- To your first point, what are the practical reasons why we need this term?
- If you simply refuse to address my comments, I cannot recommend we move forward with this publication. Your manuscript has great potential and fits well with the special issue, but the organization of your argument lacks clarity. So, if you choose to revise, please consider my feedback from the perspective of trying to help you clarify your argument. My agreement with the content of what you write is irrelevant as long as you present a well support and clear argument.
- To help us both move forward more quickly, please include a response to review table in which you list each of my comments and your response with concrete evidence from the updated text and/or highlight changes in the text. At this point, I still find that many of my comments have not been addressed in text or in your response.

**Author:**

This is neither my first nor my second submission to GEI – but this is definitely the shortest one AND [I need to use capitals] the one I had been working on for the longest time. I fail to understand how the level of my arguments, my ability of responding to critique or my English level has substantially deteriorated since I was last published in GEI.