

ACTA UNIVERSITATIS UPSALIENSIS  
Uppsala Studies in Education No 147



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# From 'the Genius' to 'the Gifted'

The Conceptualisations of Giftedness in  
Educational Discourse in Sweden



UPPSALA  
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Dissertation presented at Uppsala University to be publicly examined in Sal IV, Universitetshuset, Biskopsgatan 3, Uppsala, Friday, 15 December 2023 at 13:15 for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The examination will be conducted in English. Faculty examiner: Professor Margaret Sutherland (University of Glasgow).

### **Abstract**

Sims, C. 2023. From 'the Genius' to 'the Gifted'. The Conceptualisations of Giftedness in Educational Discourse in Sweden. *Uppsala Studies in Education* 147. 302 pp. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. ISBN 978-91-513-1920-9.

The aim of the current thesis is to investigate the conceptualisation of giftedness in educational discourse within Sweden. In the thesis, this is studied through an account of giftedness and the 'formation of the gifted subject'. The study is set in the context of educational reform history, a retracing back to points where certain routes rather than others became travelled, and an analysis of the development from there on. In the centre of the investigation are teachers and the roles they play in relation to teaching gifted students, defining, and identifying them.

In the study, the conceptualisations are traced through two sources of data. The first focuses on giftedness as formulated in the policy documents regulating Swedish education from 1820 until 2022. During this time, education was restructured from two parallel school systems to become integrated into one shared system based on ideals of democracy, equity, and inclusion. The second source of data consists in interviews with teachers who enact these policies. These teachers teach in Swedish national education and have a focus specifically on giftedness, or teach in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, or in three versions of Peak Programme (spetsutbildning).

The text analysis follows the transition from a situation where aspects of giftedness are explicitly mentioned in policy to a situation in which they are invisible, or possibly hidden inside other categories. When giftedness is reintroduced in policy it is done so with a strong focus on shortcomings and by the use of a terminology similar to that of diagnosis. The enacted policy analysis shows how teachers find enabling factors in their teaching while being constrained by other factors.

The results reveal that giftedness is conceptualised against the background of different rationalities at different points in history. Of the more dominant is a rationality based on quantification and psychological measures which has direct implications on how gifted students are treated by the system. This is also where tension is identified between giftedness in relation to a sense of normality or deviance, between expectations on collectivism and individualism, and between equity and excellence.

*Keywords:* Giftedness, cluster concept, discourse and policy analysis, enactment, the differentiation question, differentiation, acceleration, enrichment, ability grouping, Peak Programme (spetsutbildning), International Baccalaureate, formation of the subject, categorisations, rationality, psychometrics, medication, diagnosis

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ISSN 0347-1314

ISBN 978-91-513-1920-9

URN urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-512604 (<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-512604>)

*The meaning of his intellectual life lies not  
in the possession of truth but in the quest  
for uncertainties*

*Richard Hofstadter 1964:30*



# Acknowledgements

I come from a family of builders, bakers, and constructors, of clever craftspeople where precision is a virtue, and where no problem is left without a solution. These technical skills have not been passed on to me (nor the patience involved for that matter). But instead, I have built a book, baked some thoughts, and constructed a few models and arguments. Hopefully, this is done with the same amount of precision and surely with a great deal of patience as this journey towards my doctorate turned out to be more challenging than I had anticipated, and in different ways.

There are many people to whom I am thankful for supporting me in my work.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisors, Gunnlaugur Magnússon, and Johan Liljestränd for criticism, encouragement, energy, and inspiration to keep to the (less) trodden path. I would also like to thank my colleagues at Uppsala University and Gävle University. Above all, I want to mention Beatrice Westerlund who has shared so many hours and thoughts with me in our seminars during the Corona years. Some people have gone before me who, of course, have been sources of inspiration. Out of these I would specifically like to thank former PhD students, now both Doctors of Philosophy, Josefine Krih, and Lars Madej. By example you have showed what is possible, and you have shared with me your great sense of determination and bad humour. A few sharp eyes have been cast on my work in-progress. I would like to mention Jenny Wiksten Folkeryd, Andreas Bergh, Kirsi Tirri, Helene Melander Bowden, Daniel Pettersson and Christian Ydesen whom have helped me to clarify my thoughts in their valuable readings along the way. I am especially grateful to Ulf P. Lundgren who has listened patiently to my attempts to sort out a complex history and for generously sharing with me some of the innermost secrets behind our education system.

There are also the research communities from both near and afar which have enabled me to meet up with like-minded, critically-thinking people; The Nordic Network for Gifted Educational Research (NNGE), The European Council for High Ability (ECHA) and the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC) where researchers like Frank Worrell, David Yun Dai, and Albert Ziegler generously have shared some of their time and thoughts with me. In that respect I also want to mention Joan Freeman who through her writing inspired me to explore giftedness from the point of research and whom I had the opportunity to meet in the ECHA conference in Ireland in 2018. Sadly, Joan passed away

earlier this year but of course myself and other researchers in the gifted field will maintain her legacy and make sure her extensive work and devotion will not be forgotten.

While my ideas have been roosting, I have had the opportunity to try them out on people in practice. I would like to mention Lars Olsson and Andrea Dalkind from Forum för samverkan at Uppsala University for allowing me the right to roam together with my participants in Research Circles. I want to mention Markus Berjlund from Uppsala Kommun and the group of inquisitive and curious teachers in Enköping; Marie Jonsson, Veronica Andersén, Dulce Maris Arias, Inger Persson, Åsa Widmark, Inge Dorte Schwartz, Madelene Gustafsson, Kerstin Wennman, and Urban Söderberg. The latter also contributed to our anthology *Särskild begåvning i praktik och forskning* (2021; Sims ed.) by reminding us that giftedness comes in many shapes and sizes, including also practical skills. In connection to the anthology, I would also like to mention my team of co-authors, Paulina Rodriguez Milovic, Susanne Svensson, Elisabet Mellroth, Attila Szabo, Valerie Margrain, Ella Cosmovic Idsoe, Ric Sims, and translator Rebecca H Snäckerström. Through your hard work you made my task as editor much easier than it could have been if the team was less dedicated.

Behind every completed thesis, (hopefully) stands a group of family and friends: my Mum and Dad Gun-Britt and Evert Snäckerström for their infinite love and support and for sharing their delight in my education, opportunities they themselves were denied, my academic role models and father- and mother-in-law, David and Sylvia Sims and Anne Castling, my dearest, dearest brother-in-law John Sims who through regular phone calls has kept an 'oye' on me, in particular during the times in Corona isolation, our dear friends Karin von Nathusius and Hans-Peter Bögl, Edvard and Maria Cortas Nordlander, Annelie and Johan Burman for wine, dine, recluse and reality.

Last, but in no way least, I would like to thank my own family: my two daughters Rebecca and Pashmina who have contributed to my work in so many ways and patiently listened to me, my husband Ric who has supported me beyond words and walked with me, not just as a devoted husband, coffee maker and personal shopper, but as a partner-in-thought, a critique, and an office mate. On the 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022, Ric defended his own thesis on extended cognition in Philosophy at Exeter University. I am so, so proud of the three of you!

A common way to end this type of acknowledgement is by promising friends and family that things from now on will be different - travels will be made, parties will be held, birthdays will be remembered, houses will be cleaned. I will not do the same, as I am afraid I see this thesis not as an end, but rather as a beginning.

*Ad Astra,*

*Caroline Sims*

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# Abbreviations

ATL	Approaches to Learning
BMI	Body Mass Index
BUP	Department for Psychological Treatment of Children and Young Adults
CAS	Creativity Action Service
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
DLS	Diagnostic Screening Test of Reading Comprehension
DMGT	Developmental Model of Giftedness and Talent
DPA	Swedish Data Protection Authority
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
EE	Extended Essay
ESS	Elementary School Statute
FSC	Folk School Curriculum
FSS	Folk School Statute
GCP	Gifted Child Programme
GSC	Grammar School Curriculum
GSS	Grammar School Statute
IB	International Baccalaureate
IBDP	International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
LGR	Läroplan för grundskolan (Elementary School Curriculum)
LGY	Läroplan för gymnasiet (Upper Secondary School Curriculum)
NCM	Nationellt centrum för matematikundervisning (National Centre for Education in Mathematics)
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RC	Rearing Committee (Uppfostringskommiteén)
RFSB	Riksförbundet för Särskild Begåvning (National Association for Giftedness)
RSC	Curriculum for Reál School
SCB	National Central Bureau of Statistics
SFS	Svensk Författningssamling,
SKL	Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, now SKR
SKR	Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner
SMART	Systematic Mapping and Analysis of Research Topographies

SNAE	Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket)
SPPI	The Governmental Institute for Psychology and Pedagogy
SPSM	Swedish National Agency for Special Pedagogy
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SOU	Statens Offentliga Utredningar, Green Papers
ToK	Theory of knowledge
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WICS	Wisdom, Intelligence, Creativity Synthesised
WISC	Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children

# Part 1



# Chapter 1: Introduction

The notion of fairness has been a fundamental ideal throughout the course of historical reform process in education in Sweden by invoking concepts such as democracy, equity, and inclusion (c.f. Magnússon & D. Pettersson, 2021). This idea concerns not only pedagogical issues of how education is organised, or the content and form of teaching, but also how students are conceptualized, and which groups of students are made visible or prioritized within the education system. So far, conceptualisation and visibility have received most attention in the realm of special education and the support students should have when finding school difficult or intellectually challenging (c.f. Magnússon & Sims 2021). However, a case can be made that conceptualisation and visibility at the other end of the spectrum is equally important in a ‘school for all’. What we will see in this thesis is how such matter is more complex than it first may seem (Enkvist et al. 2017).

In 1997, the Swedish psychologist Roland S. Persson introduced into the Swedish vocabulary the concept of ‘*särbegåvning*’, which can be translated as ‘giftedness’, a term used internationally.<sup>1</sup> By introducing this term, Persson refers to a student who has exceptional abilities in one or more areas and who “continues to surprise by way of approaching and applying knowledge” (Persson 1997:25). Right from the start, the concept was primarily meant for an educational setting and was part of a reaction against what Persson describes as a political turn in education “aiming not only for equality of opportunity, but also equality of performance” (Persson 1997:5, my translation). The consequences of such an ideal, Persson argued, is that it expects all students to be the same, and it fails to acknowledge educational needs of “gifted students” (Persson 1997:2, my translation).

In his research, Persson has continued to explore the relationship between ‘*särbegåvning*’ and education. In 2010, he published a survey based on a sample of 287 participants from Swedish Mensa (Persson 2010). The aim of the study was to investigate how these respondents had experienced school and family life in relation to being gifted, and to what extent the level of understanding of their abilities and intellectual stimulation changed from primary school through to university. Even if the sample in the study exhibits some possible biases, no similar study has been done in Sweden with that

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<sup>1</sup> Launching this concept, Persson effectively reintroduced the issue of giftedness in Swedish education and set it in relation to the international research field. His work therefore functions as a relevant point of departure for this thesis.

purpose, or with this particular group of respondents.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the study argues against a common assumption that gifted students manage well in school without support and confirmation by their surroundings, an argument that makes a case for an investigation into giftedness in a Swedish context.

In summary, 92 percent of the respondents in Persson's study reported general negative perceptions of education at elementary level. Their experiences were described as gradually improving throughout the school system, but 65 percent were still dissatisfied at university level. The reasons were having "switched off" (Persson 2010:555) during previous stages in education due to being understimulated, and in lacking requisite study skills when finally having to deal with demanding tasks and material. The participants also reported how they were constrained by a number of strategies used by their teachers. For example, the respondents described how teachers failed to recognize alternative solutions to problems, even if the answers were correct, and if exercises were completed before others in class, participants were asked to erase their answers and start again to "finish together with the rest", as one of the respondents expresses it (Persson 2010:550). The participants also described how they had been seen as a threat to the teacher or to their peers, and how they were harassed and alienated. In some cases, the respondents had been used as teacher assistants, which may have been considered a way to stimulate their development. Yet, since the activities given were low-level tasks (i.e. marking their peers' tests) and not part of any long-term planning, Persson interpreted this type of activity as a strategy to keep the students occupied and as such taking time away from their own learning. As a consequence, the participants both adapted to an ability below their actual capacity, and developed a mistrust in the education system. At the end of the paper Persson concludes: "It is somewhat surprising that a nation priding itself in presenting to the world the most prestigious recognition of giftedness of them all, the Nobel Prize, does not encourage intellectual prowess in its education system" (Persson 2010:560).

While Persson draws conclusions from an admittedly narrow sample, international research presents similar observations concerning the study situation for gifted student. For example, the matter has been researched from the point of view of teaching in specific subjects, (Dai et al 2015, Olszewskij-Kubilus et al 2017, Zhang, 2021) application of specific teaching strategies (Casino-Garcia, et al. 2021, Dare & Nowicki, 2018, Miravete, 2022) or specific programmes to support gifted students in their learning (Hertzog et al. 2021, Szymanski et al. 2018, Worrell, & Dickson, 2022). Less attention, on the other hand, is given to the relationship between giftedness and

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<sup>2</sup> Firstly, a sample bias could be present, since membership in Mensa is based on IQ-tests it covers mostly mathematical-logical abilities. Secondly, it is possible to expect a 'response bias' in that the ones completing the study could be the ones who primarily are dissatisfied.

education from the perspective of educational policy, and in particular in a Swedish context, which is the focus of this thesis.

Situating teaching of different abilities historically, we will find that Sweden has a long tradition of teaching basic literacy to the whole population. For example, a law from 1686, stated that the responsibility of the priest was to control reading ability among the members of his parish, parents and guardians could be punished if they neglected to teach their children such a skill (Lundgren & Säljö 2010:43). In 1882, this regulation was followed by a law which made education in schools compulsory. However, access to more than elementary education was not part of this regulation. Instead, education was organised in a two-parallel system, Grammar Schools (*läroverk*) for the rich and Folk School (*folksskola*) for the poor without any connections between the two. As a consequence many people capable of further studies never got the opportunity to pursue them.

In an attempt to change this situation, one of the most frequently debated pedagogical matters in educational reform work within the country has been a concern for how to replace the parallel system with an equitable education system common to all citizens, at the same time as taking individual differences in ability into account. In the reform work this issue has been summarised as the ‘differentiation question’ (*differentieringsfrågan*) (Marklund 1985:248) a matter described as “of concern for all pedagogues in their everyday work” (Skott, D. Pettersson & Bergh 2015:97, my translation). One of the early individuals to raise concerns regarding this matter was Fridtjuv Berg, the Swedish Minister of Education at the beginning of the 1900’s. He argued that equality in education would be maintained not only if education was made more accessible, but also if all students were offered the same education based on an idea of ‘simple equality’: “where everyone has an equal amount of good” and “where no one is entitled to more, no one has to suffice with less” (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006:30-31). What seems to be the case therefore is that there is tension built into the Swedish education system between aiming to support difference at the same time as maintaining equality. How this relates to the concept of giftedness will be explored further in the following thesis.

## Aim and research questions

As already indicated, the interest of this thesis is to look at giftedness from the point of view of policy analysis. Such analysis is concerned not only with the interpretation of text documents formulated by official authorities, but also as a study of the processes by which these texts come alive and continue to live through being enacted in the educational community. Stephen J. Ball (1993) explains:

[S]omewhat under the influence of literary theory, we can see policies as representations which are encoded in complex ways (via struggles, compromises, authoritative, public interpretations, and reinterpretations) and decoded in complex ways (via actors' interpretations and meanings in relation to their history, experiences, skills, resources, and context). A policy is both contested and changing, always in a state of 'becoming'" (Ball 1993:11).

This means that even if policies are formulated at the level of state in the form of '*policy as text*', their implementation is not merely a top-down procedure. They are also formulated through '*policy as enactment*' by being interpreted, reinterpreted, confirmed or rejected by other actors (Ball 1993).

Hence, the aim of the current thesis is to examine the conceptualisations of giftedness over time as text and as enacted within a Swedish educational context. The central importance of the struggles and interpretations around certain views of giftedness and how they came into being in the education system is in line with a third aspect of Ball's theory (1993) - '*policy as discourse*'. The work is guided by the following research questions, clarified in more detail in the following chapters on theory and on method:

- How is giftedness conceptualised in a selection of significant policy documents?
- How is giftedness conceptualised in a sample of enacted teaching practices?
- What rationalities are these conceptualisations based on?
- What tensions, if any, can be found in the conceptualization processes?

Although both official authorities and teachers are seen as significant in formulating and regulating policy, the focus in the thesis it is not from a perspective of governance per se. Neither is it centred on the large-scale political and economic forces that shape government's interaction with education. While these forces are undoubtedly relevant to the governmental role in the making of policy, there is not enough space in the current dissertation to do them justice. Instead, the focus is on the intersection between policies as text and policies as practice. Thus this study is based on the content of the policy documents closest to the teachers' practices, in the form of education acts, curricula and syllabi and the way teachers relate to these in their every day practice (if they do). In analysing these conceptualisations, and to narrow down the scope further, I have focused the analysis on three topics in policy in relation to giftedness; the role of the teacher in teaching and identifying giftedness, teaching strategies applied to support gifted students, and categorisation of giftedness through definition and identification.

Even though this investigation takes place within the educational context of Sweden, the investigation covers not only the national education system but also the International Baccalaureate (IB) which operates within the country's

borders. In international research in giftedness, the IB is often portrayed as being particularly suitable for gifted students due to its demanding and rigorous course content (Cole 2015, Dare & Nowicki 2015, Gagné 2007, Hertberg-Davis & Callhan 2008, Kanevsky & Clelland 2013, Poelzer & Feldhusen 2010, Tokey 2000). Since 1977, the IB has been established as an alternative form of education in Sweden, primarily at schools at upper secondary level. In addition, from 2009, the so-called Peak Programmes (*spetsutbildningar*, my translation) have been offered as more demanding alternatives of the Swedish national curriculum at lower and upper secondary level. It is therefore appropriate to include a sample of text and teachers from the IB Diploma Programme (IBDP)<sup>3</sup> and Peak Programmes in this study as both options relate to more demanding forms of education, which may relate to gifted as well as other students.

Even if research into different aspects of giftedness can be traced back to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Dai 2010:8ff), there are only limited previous studies on giftedness in Sweden. The thesis intends to add both a Swedish voice to the international research on giftedness and to national research in several ways. Firstly, I investigate the trajectory of educational reform history by collecting new empirical data in a Swedish setting. This is set in the context of the 'differentiation question', from a different angle than done previously. Secondly, there is no previous study of giftedness from the point of view of policy and discourse analysis in Sweden. This thesis is the fifth written on the topic of giftedness within the country and the first which is not focused on didactical issues to do with teaching mathematically gifted students. (Pettersson 2011, Matsson 2013, Szabo 2017, Mellroth 2018). Thirdly, only limited research has previously been done on the IB and the Peak Programme, hence this thesis is a further contribution to the field in that respect. Fourthly, I contribute to the field methodologically by providing a tool for analysis in the form of a cluster concept (Wittgenstein 1953, Gaut 2005). As clarified further in Chapter 3, the cluster concept encompasses a wide scope of definitions of giftedness, and has to my knowledge, not appeared in previous research. To summarise, the thesis provides a starting point for comparative analysis of policies in other education system and a dynamic tool for how such research can be done.

Nevertheless, the thesis speaks also to a well-established field of research where, as we will also see in Chapter 3, many aspects of the current thesis have been explored before in different contexts. For example, many studies concern definition and identification and what teaching adjustments should be made to challenge and stimulate students in the gifted category (c.f. Heller et al. 2005; Lo & Porrath 2017; Subotnik et al. 2011). In some previous studies, limited educational provisions to gifted students are related to a tension between excellence and equity, evidence that Sweden is not the only country

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<sup>3</sup> For students at the age of 16-19.

where such an issue has been voiced (Benbow & Stanley 1996, Borland 2005, O'Reilly 2018, Riley & White, 2016, Smith & Campbell 2016).

## Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into four overarching parts, each containing a number of chapters. Part 1 provides the foundation of the thesis in the form of historical and scientific backgrounds, definitions, theory and method and relevant choices made in relation to these components. In *Chapter 2*, the scope of the thesis is placed in context through a summary of the history of the reform work and development of the education system along the lines of the 'differentiation question'. Later in the chapter, policy in the International Baccalaureate is described with a focus on the role of the teacher and the categorisation of students, and its relationship to national education.

In *Chapter 3*, these background details are followed by further contextualisation in previous research. To position the thesis in relation to national research, a summary is made of the four preceding thesis works published within Sweden as well as more recent publications. One of the issues debated in the field for more than 100 years, without agreement, is how to define giftedness. Not only is such definition relevant for reasons of clarity within the thesis, but needed also for what I want to do, i.e. to study an issue in policy where the exact wording may not be present, but different formulations of its content might appear. In this third chapter, results from a review of international research is reported resulting in a model providing both an analytical tool for comparison in the empirical work in Part 2 and a broad understanding of giftedness within the thesis as a whole. This chapter also presents common strategies in teaching adjustments for gifted students. Both the discussion on definition and teaching strategies position the thesis in relation to international research.

In *Chapter 4*, further clarification is given of the theoretical foundations of this work, including an account of discourse and policy analysis and how the relationship between them is understood. The analysis of the discursive elements are based on Michel Foucault (c.f. 2008), primarily his concepts *Raison d'État* and the *formation of the subject*. These concepts are then applied in a contemporary setting using the philosopher Ian Hacking's (2007) conception of 'making up people' and the sociologist Peter Conrad's (2007) theories on medicalisation. In addition, Bo Lindensjö and Ulf P. Lundgren's (2006) cell structure of educational governance is explained, supplemented by the theory of policy enactment by Stephen J. Ball (c.f 1993). Together, Lindensjö, Lundgren and Ball indicate where policy is formulated, regulated and enacted, as well as what actors are involved in doing so.

In *Chapter 5*, the combination of methods used for sample selection, to collect and analyse data are described in more detail, along with ethical

considerations of relevance for the thesis. Early on, the investigation was meant to include classroom observations of teachers at work, and interviews with students identified as gifted. Due to the Covid pandemic, the methodological approach was changed to include a pilot study in the form of a survey to a small group of teachers, followed by multiple phone interviews with three samples of teachers. These teachers teach in national education specifically focused on challenging gifted students, in the IB Diploma Programme and in a selection of upper secondary Peak Programmes. At the end of Chapter 5, a critical evaluation is presented, discussing issues of validity and reliability in relation to theory, method, and how data has been collected and analysed.

In agreement with Ball's division between *policy as text* and *policy as enactment*, the treatment of data has been divided in two. In Part 2 of the thesis, policy documents are presented and analysed. Here, the 1820 Grammar school documents were chosen as a starting point. The reason for that is that these texts were the ones in use at the time of the introduction of the Folk School in 1842 which presents the earliest meeting point of the two systems. Against the backdrop of the 'differentiation question' I have then structured the rest of the text analysis into three historical periods along the lines of significant stages in the educational reform process towards integration. *Chapter 6* encompasses the early period, meaning the clearly divided parallel school system from 1820 to 1928. *Chapter 7* covers the middle period, which starts in the extensive reform work in the 1940's resulting in an integrated school system in the 1960's. *Chapter 8* describes the third and later period, which covers the the time after integration was realised, from from 1969 to the latest revision in 2022. In *Chapter 9*, the final chapter in Part 2, an analysis is made of a selection of additional documents published by the official school authorities. The latter explicitly address giftedness why they are considered relevant to include in the analysis. Together, all four chapters in Part 2 relate to the first research question on the conceptualisation of giftedness in text (Ball 1993).

In Part 3, data describing contemporary teaching practices is described and analysed. This relates to the second research question on conceptualisation of giftedness and enactment (Ball 1993). The results from the pilot web survey are used as introductions to each of the chapters otherwise based on data from the interviews with the teachers. In *Chapter 10*, an account is given of how the teachers describe what their roles are in enacting gifted education and what resources constrain and enable them in doing so (Ball et al. 2012). In *Chapter 11*, specific teaching aspects of their enactments are described and analysed. In *Chapter 12*, the teachers' categorisations of students are analysed through how they are defined and identified. At the end of Part 3, the findings in all three chapters are summarised and compared, emphasising what processes are included in the teachers' enactments (Ball et al. 2012) of giftedness and their relationships to the findings in the text analysis in Part 2.

In Part 4 of the thesis, *Chapter 13* offers an analysis and conclusion of the results, synthesising findings in the data through the eyes of *policy as discourse* (Ball 1993). The chapter enables a discussion on implications in relation to the third and fourth research questions of the thesis, of what rationalities (Conrad 2007, Foucault 2008, Hacking 2007) the conceptualisations are based on and what tensions can be identified. *Chapter 14*, finally, offers concluding remarks of the content of the thesis including a reflection on its contributions and possible limitations.

## Chapter 2: Differentiation in Context - Historical Background

To understand how giftedness is conceptualised in educational policy, it is relevant to analyse the meaning of the concept set in its historical context (Fairclough & Wodak 1997; Westberg 2021). The aim of the current chapter, therefore, is to clarify the differentiating structures and inequalities of the parallel school system that the educational reform work has aimed to change. Secondly, with the ‘differentiation question’ in mind, the chapter summarises some of the points of significance in reforming Swedish education into one integrated system. In addition, the end of the chapter offers an introduction to policy in the IB Diploma Programme. The intention here is to clarify the relationship between the IB and national education, and how the IB contributes an additional voice to educational discourse in Sweden.

The content of the chapter is based on descriptions by Sixten Marklund (1985), Bo Lindensjö and Ulf P. Lundgren (2006), Urban Dahllöf (1967), and Gunnar Richardson (2010), sources that are commonly referred to in relation to the ‘differentiation question’ and to the historical development of the education system<sup>4</sup>. The descriptions are complemented by readings of Christian Lundahl (2006, 2006:2/2007:1), my own reading of the original policy documents, and statistical data from Statistics Sweden (SCB). Worth keeping in mind is that rather than giving a detailed account of the extensive investigative work done in the history of the education system, the description focuses only on the circumstances which according to the referred sources generated changes in the policy documents of significance for differentiation within the education system.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Here, these texts are viewed as empirical (not to say canonical) historical descriptions of the education system’s development.

<sup>5</sup> For example, not mentioned in the description here is the idea of a ‘Talent Reserve’ (*begåvningsreserven*). In the 1940’s IQ tests undertaken by the military at the point of enlistments for National Service indicated that there was a significant discrepancy between the IQ score and the level of education of the conscript, known as the Talent Reserve. However, even if attempts were made to draw attention to this fact, it had very little impact in terms of education reforms (Marklund 1985:61-64). See also SOU 1958:87 and Husén & Härnqvist (2000).

## Dividing Lines in Education

As mentioned in the introduction, Sweden has a long tradition of educating its population. However, from the beginning the education system is also about division and differentiation. In 1842, the first Folk School Statute (*Folkskolestadgan*, my translation) was formulated in Sweden, stating the responsibility of all parishes to manage at least one school for the children registered there. Even if the initiative appeared to be a significant point in providing education to the whole population, it was still far from making it equal. Firstly, in terms of teaching, these parish schools were focused on very basic levels of knowledge and skills, and in a limited number of subjects only. Secondly, these schools were never fully integrated into the existing education system, nor were they even meant to be. As a result, education became divided into two parallel systems - Grammar School (*läroverk*) and Upper Secondary education (*gymnasium*) for the upper classes, and Folk School (*folkskola*) for socialisation of the poor (Burman 2014:148-149).<sup>6</sup>

By comparing the first Folk School Statute (FSS)<sup>7</sup> from 1842 with the equivalent Grammar School Statute (GSS)<sup>8</sup> valid at the time, concrete examples of this divide become evident. To start with, Folk Schools held no entry requirements, neither did they include formal examinations, and knowledge requirements were kept to a minimum including basic literacy and numeracy, and enough knowledge in Christianity to study for the first Communion (FSS1842:7§). In comparison, Grammar School students had to provide evidence of already attained skills in reading and in mathematics on enrolment. Moreover, acceptance was based on a notice by the local priest stating the students' knowledge of Luther's Catechism, and of correct behaviour, as well as a doctor's notice confirming a good standard of health (GSS1820:3§). In the Grammar School Statute, specific knowledge requirements were listed for all levels and in all subjects and examinations were offered at the end of each school year. Teachers at Grammar School required an academic degree based on university studies, while Folk School teachers were trained in seminars. This meant the latter category of teachers received some subject knowledge as well as instructions how to teach but not as extensively as a university degree (Burman 2014:150). The most striking difference in this sense occurred between schools in the city and countryside schools since rural Folk Schools

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<sup>6</sup> In Swedish the word *folk*, just like in the German equivalent, refers to the people of the nation. Even if other translations are possible, I have chosen to keep the term 'folk' since it captures the idea of concerning the population as a whole. For the translation of *läroverk*, the English term Grammar School was chosen as the most suitable in its connotations to classical education originating in medieval cathedral schools.

<sup>7</sup> *Kongl. Maj:ts Nådiga Stadga angående Folk-undervisningen i Riket* (1942), my translation

<sup>8</sup> *Kongl. Maj:ts Nådiga Stadga för Rikets Allmänna Elementar-läroverk* (1820), my translation.

were even more lenient in their demands for formal teaching qualifications (SCB 1974:41-42). For example, a person suggested in the Folk School Statute as suitable for teaching duties was the bell ringer, otherwise known for his “vaccination and bloodletting” responsibilities (FSS1842:6§).

Perhaps the strongest barrier to studying, apart from low expectations on student performance, was the cost of education. While Folk School education was financially regulated by the local parishes and thereby free of charge, Grammar School education demanded a number of different fees. Yet, students without means could receive a subsidy if they were “diligent” and “prone to studying” (GSS1820 3:2§h). This might not have been as effective as it sounds since there is evidence of active campaign against financially supporting students altogether, most likely as a way to dismiss poor students. In 1820 the Rearing Committee (*Uppfostringskommittéen*) even argued that to ask for financial support was equal to begging, which at the time was prohibited according to common law. In a report published by the committee it is stated that in the past, “the King may have relied on recruiting people from the working class to become civil servants”, but how such an “unjust relationship” between “the ones who provide and the ones who consume” (*de närande och de tärande*) was in need of change (RC1820:51).<sup>9</sup> It was argued that the temptation to choose a road never meant to be travelled would be more easily avoided if the means were not even provided.

As can be deduced from the above, access to school beyond elementary level was restricted through several controlling instances. To qualify, the person needed money and to be known to those in significant positions, such as the priest and the doctor. The system divide is perhaps most apparent in the categorisation of students based on expected performance where Folk School students faced low demands in terms of knowledge, there were no exams, and lenient qualifications for the teachers who taught them.

## Education by numbers

How few children managed to reach the higher levels of the education system can be seen in the statistics. Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sweden was a country where 90 percent of the population lived in the countryside, and only 24 towns in a territory of approximately 500,000 km<sup>2</sup> had more than 2,000 inhabitants (SCB 2015). Schools in general were far away from where many people in rural communities lived and Grammar Schools were only available in the major towns. Consequently, for a great deal of the child population, time spent on education meant time spent away from home and away from essential tasks required for the upkeep of the family. Hence, the percentage of children atten-

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<sup>9</sup> Uppfostrings-Comiteen (1820) *Anvisningar och råd till lärare om sättet att verkställa hwad Kongl Maj:t i Nåder uti Skol-Ordningen af den 16 Dec. 1820 stadgat och anbefallt*, my translation

ding school was lower in rural than urban communities, and it was more common for students in rural schools to study only part time. For example, at around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 78 percent of schools in rural areas had students attending part time (SCB 1974:5, Richardson 2010:101).

At this point in time, there were two social changes that increased access to education. Firstly, rationalisation in agriculture together with industrialisation increased the demand for more specialised knowledge, which created a need for a more educated workforce (Marklund 1985:226). Secondly, demands were placed on access to higher education for more people in line with a gradual development towards the institution of universal suffrage, (SCB 2015, Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006). On the one hand, this meant having to make Folk School more educational. On the other it meant also making Grammar School more accessible. The latter was increasingly critiqued for being outdated and a high percentage of Grammar School students left education for work without graduating. Out of those who continued to upper secondary education, as many as 75 percent failed the final examination, identified as having to do with demanding components in Latin (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006:34). In response, in 1905 the Reál School was initiated as a form of further education without Latin altogether. Instead, the focus was on science and on “knowledge of direct utility, and citizenship” (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006:36, my translation). In 1909, as a way of making Grammar Schools geographically more accessible, Intermediate Schools (*mellanskolor*) were opened at places previously without facilities at that level (SCB 1977:11, 25).

Eventually, more possibilities for transition from Folk School to intermediate level and further to Upper Secondary education got established. Dependent on what had been decided locally this could take place at different points in time which resulted in a number of different routes to get to further education (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006:44). Hence, it is difficult to precisely pinpoint the number of students enrolled at a particular level in relation to the total population of that age. Also, even if data is available from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and onwards, it was not until 1920 that methods of collecting official statistics were standardized which resulted in more reliable data.

Table 2:1 Number of Students and Proportionality

Year	FS	FS Prop.	GS	GS Prop.	USE	USE Prop.
1920	708 821	79.5%	56 421	4.9%	9 910	1.8%
1930	672 823	86.3%	61 551	5.6%	11 488	2.0%
1940	548 792	87.8%	74 922	7.6%	19 106	3.6%
1950	612 158	84%	114 747	13.3%	24 708	5.9%
1960	843 110	88.4%	167 094	14.3%	55 828	9.4%

Source: scb.se 1974:5, 1977:11, my summary

FS: Number of Students in Folk School, age 7-14 years. FS Prop.: Proportion of total age population. GS: Number of Students in Grammar School, age 11-17 years. GS Prop: Proportion of total age population. USE: Number of Students in Upper Secondary education, age 15-19 years. USE Prop: Proportion of total age population.

As can be seen, in terms of the percentages, very few students made the transition to further education even as the possibilities were extended. For example, in 1920 more than 700,000 children between the age of 7 to 14 attended school in some form, which is close to 80 percent of the total population of that age group. Even though the line of progression from elementary level to upper secondary education is complex to follow, it is still possible to see how far the percentage decreases the further up in the system we go, and what a small percentage of the age groups attended Grammar School and upper secondary education in comparison to Folk School.

A further divide within the school system, ran between male and female students. Already from the beginning, Folk Schools were open for both genders while further and higher education was considered appropriate for male students only. To some extent female students were educated in separate schools for girls, but in 1905, they were at last accepted into the general Grammar School system. However, for a long time they remained in minority both in terms of attendance, and in taking as well as passing the final exams, as can be seen in the table below.

Table 2:2 Examination rates Grammar School in relation to gender

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total no. Students</b>	<b>Total no. Women</b>	<b>Total no. Students Graduating</b>	<b>Total no. of Women Graduating</b>
1920	8 851	1 204	2 048	377
1930	10 117	2 334	2 248	477
1940	16 543	5 744	3 839	1 243
1950	20 084	8 429	4 497	1795
1960	47 413	22 561	8 498	3 979

Source: scb.se 1974:5, 1977:11, my summary.

To summarise the findings, in the data presented in the first table it is possible to see how limited Grammar School education was in terms of total number of students registered. Judging by the data presented in this second table it is also possible to understand worries about the limited numbers taking the exam, but definitely how small a number of women graduated.

To conclude, what has been presented in the comparison between the Folk School and the Grammar School systems, together with the statistical data, indicate that the education system was indeed exclusive and divided, and it is fair to assume that many students able to take on further studies never got the opportunity to do so. The issues needed solving therefore can be understood as a matter of access in relation to class, of the relationship between rural and urban, but also one of gender inequality.

## Integration, psychometrics, and calibrating ability

After a period of slow but gradual convergence, the voices in favour of a single integrated system grew stronger. It was suggested that at a first stage, education would be common for all students, while the second stage would differentiate students suitable to further studies from the ones who either would study more practically oriented lines of education or leave education altogether. Despite seeming clear in theory, the reform process to realise such an idea proved to be full of challenges. Interesting from the point of view of the ‘differentiation question’ and ability there were two camps regarding on what grounds students should be selected. On the one side, were grammar school representatives, based in the cities, who argued for early differentiation. This was thought to ensure the intellectual homogeneity needed for keeping to a high level of teaching. On the other side, were the voices from a more rural Folk School faction arguing for late differentiation in a school common for all, which was argued to be beneficial for children from the working class. The divide, therefore, cut between Grammar School, urban conditions, and early differentiation and that of Folk School, rural conditions, and late differentiation (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006:43, 48, Marklund 1985:265).

Being a time of war, it was precisely due to the war, the political parties in the 1940’s agreed a truce. According to Lindensjö and Lundgren, this meant less of a static positioning in the debate, driven as it was by other actors than the political parties. Two people, Alva Myrdal, and her husband Gunnar became influential in the debate. In aiming to modernise society one of their main arguments was to modernize education, referring to their experiences from travels in the United States as an ideal. In their book *Contact with America* (1941, my translation) Swedish society is described as a representative of the old world, heavily criticised as reluctant to change while the US is portrayed as modern, liberal, “youthful and experimental” (Myrdal & Myrdal 1941:89, my translation). According to the couple, the whole of Swedish society was in need of a reform and the way education was organized was defined as part of the core of the problem. In their opinion, instead of the old-fashioned system, education should be “[e]ducation for citizenship” based on principles of democracy and pragmatism, inspired by John Dewey (Myrdal & Myrdal 1941:95, my translation. See also Englund 1986:262). In addition, Myrdal and Myrdal argued that to avoid a society where people are divided, any dividing structures in the education system had to be avoided. Therefore, they argued differentiation should be done pedagogically in the classroom through individualised teaching and not organisationally as part of the education system (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006:46).

At the next stage of the process, two major committees were set to investigate how the systems could be integrated and how access to higher education could increase. One of these begun their work in 1940 and the other in 1946.

In common between the two were arguments in favour of introducing psychometrics in education, meaning that IQ-tests and the model of normal distribution should be used to measure ability and organise students accordingly. The use of such methods was thought to offer a scientific, objective, and reliable base for judgement (Marklund 1985:250, Richardson 2010:132). In conjunction, four professors in psychology and/or pedagogy were asked to make their expert judgements in the ‘differentiation question’. The issues to be analysed were firstly what would be a suitable age for children to enrol in education. Secondly, if the parallel system would be reformed into one system, at what age would transition from Folk School to Grammar School be suitable. The professors were given two propositions to choose from, either early differentiation, meaning after four years of common education, or late differentiation meaning after six years. In addition, the experts were asked to comment on the use of intelligence testing as a foundation for making decisions about ability, as well as issues concerning the relationship between maturity of the students and content in education. As it turned out, three of the professors were in favour of early differentiation while only one of them argued in favour of late differentiation. Interestingly enough, it was only the latter, John Elmgren, who was chosen to continue to explore the issue. This meant that to differentiate late and pedagogically within the classroom rather than in the system continued to be the main idea (SOU 1943:19, see further Chapter 7).

As a continuation of the emphasis on psychometrics in education Elmgren established a new institute, SPPI - *The National Institute for Psychology and Pedagogy* (my translation). According to Christian Lundahl (2006), the institute aimed for teachers to function and think like psychologists about child development and deviance. To distribute these ideas, summer courses were offered where teachers were educated in how to apply a variety of different methods for testing. It was argued that the more details the child was tested on the more could be said to guide the teachers about the child’s abilities, orientation, and intelligence. The courses ran for a period of ten years between the 1940’s and 1950’s and Lundahl estimates they may have involved as many as 1,000 teachers from all stages in education. Judging by the number of applicants, the courses were popular (Lundahl 2006:208ff). In terms of content, Lundahl describes further how all aspects of a child were to be tested. How meticulous these methods were can be seen in one of his examples, where in a course running over a period of three weeks no less than 70 different tests were the object of practice (Lundahl 2006:216).

What Lundahl describes “indicate a transition away from teachers to other agents with an interest in assessing children” (Lundahl 2006:226, my translation). Marklund adds further to the description of a close relationship between teachers and the medical profession by referring to how teachers were given further training in “educational hygiene” which meant “to take actions of medical and pedagogical kind”. The teachers were encouraged to use the textbook *Läkepedagogik* (1939) which through the word *läke-* refers both to healing

and to medicine. According to Marklund the textbook was used “for a long time” in teacher education for such purposes (Marklund 1985:250, my translation). Furthermore, he refers to the Binet-Simon intelligence test as a means to “diagnose weak students and to differentiate between classes for the weak and the normal” (Marklund 1985:47, my translation). In 1937, the Terman-Merrill test was translated into Swedish, which according to Marklund was “used frequently by us since then” (Marklund 1985:47, my translation).

As a result, in response to the ‘differentiation question’, a clinical approach to education was introduced where the curriculum was calibrated according to “what a normal child could normally perform” (Lundahl 2006:198, my translation). In addition, education became focused on structures to deal with students in relation to normality and deviance where the psychologists functioned as “the guardian of mental hygiene”, a “personification of the precise, clinical science in education” and as “a guarantee for objectivity” (Lundahl 2006:228-229, my translation).

### Integration and inclusion – education on equal terms?

Moving on another twenty years, in 1962 and after more than 120 years of debating, the two school systems were replaced by one comprehensive system divided into three stages: primary school, middle school, and lower secondary school. During the first eight years education was undifferentiated. After that difference in ability was to be addressed by offering some possibility for electives, and by applying ability grouping in mathematics and English. To avoid differentiation, the electives and groupings were entirely based on the students’ free choices and not grade, or test based, intended to widen recruitment (Marklund 1985:231). The system was in use until 1969 when the differentiation in Year 9 was taken away. Instead, the division between Standard and Advanced courses were made into undifferentiated electives (Marklund 1985:136).

In 1968, the integration process reached a second stage resulting in one common upper secondary school, free of charge, but still with different theoretical and vocational profiles of different length - three or four years for the theoretical pre-university courses and two years for the vocational. These integrative stages were based on a strong conviction that all education would then be of equal value, which meant it would be insignificant who chose to study what. Lindensjö and Lundgren summarise the argument: “If inequality to a great extent is dependent on how groups and institutions give status and prestige to different education, one way to promote equality would be if the state – as a promotor of status – refrain from considering one line of education as “of higher value than another” (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006:70, my translation). The main idea was to create the greatest possible unity by:

- Erasing differences in status between vocational and theoretical courses
- Abolishing examinations and prestigious names for lines of education
- Avoiding and delaying definitive choices and giving all students the same qualifications to study at upper secondary level (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006:70, my translation).

Nevertheless, recruitment figures to higher education continued to disappoint the politicians. In their opinion, despite having full access to education, not enough students from working class backgrounds chose to study at a higher level (Marklund 1985:228). The logic of the argument went something like although access is given, differences still prevail, therefore, schools need to work even harder in compensating for insufficiencies due to background conditions and to develop structures to support such students. As a result, the reform work concerning the ‘differentiation question’ turned its focus to disciplinary issues, lack of student motivation, and to the high percentage of students leaving education without passing grades (Richardson 2010:186). Moreover, from the 1970’s equity became translated into redistribution of resources based on a principle that no student should be deprived of possibilities offered in education due to difficulties in school (Englund 1986:267, Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006:78). In more concrete figures, the system for students in need of support expanded and the percentage of students placed in special units (*hjälpklass*) increased by 300 percent, from about 10 percent in the 1940’s to 40 percent at the beginning of the 1970’s including approximately 20,000 teachers full time occupation (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006:65, Richardson 2010:179, see further Chapter 8).

Making another leap forward, in 1994, the integration process continued with the introduction of the concept of *inclusion*, founded in UNESCO and *The Salamanca Statement* (1994). In practice the Statement argues in favour of keeping students together, and to avoid any of the former dividing solutions, at the same time as certifying entitlement to additional support for students at the risk of failing and in need of special education. As a result, education extended its focus on diagnoses and the vast number of students effected by these (Magnússon 2019, Magnússon & Sims, 2021). Worth noticing in relation to ability and giftedness is how the Salamanca Statement in its original English version explicitly mentions ‘gifted students’ as one of the target groups of inclusion, along with children with disabilities, children in poverty and minority children. However, when translated into Swedish the categories in the original were kept intact aside from the actual term giftedness which was not translated, but in fact replaced by the words “other children” (*andra barn*) (Utbildningsdepartementet [Ministry of Education] 2001:22, 3).

Along the inclusive lines of thinking, in 1994 the last differences between programmes at upper secondary school level were erased since all lines of

education were made into an equal length of three years, qualifying all students to university studies independently of having studied a vocational or theoretical programme. Equally, the former ability groupings in English and mathematics were taken out of the system, erasing the final organisational differentiation. Thereby, it may seem as if the ‘differentiation question’ had finally been solved in a fully integrated system meant to include all students.

Yet, the educational reform work has not just moved forward, as there are also examples of returns to previous ideas. In 2009, a parallel structure was reintroduced into the education system via the so-called Peak Programmes (*spetsutbildning*). These can be described as a partial acceleration and enrichment programme. The aim of the Peak Programmes was to make university level education accessible for upper secondary level students “with a particular interest”, “aptitude” and “talent”, to increase motivation for “those who want to reach further” and to gain optimal development in accordance with their capacity (Utbildningsdepartementet [Ministry of Education] 2008, my translation). Today, the Peak Programmes are offered in a variety of profiles, such as in natural sciences, the humanities, mathematics, or as aesthetic profiles in visual arts, music, dance or drama. Even if these programmes are regulated by the same policy documents as standard education, they have their own locally formulated syllabi. The content of the programme is clearly focused on specialised skills and knowledge with high expectation on students’ performance (SKOLFS 2011:46, SKOLFS 2011:47). At first, the Peak Programme was invented as a pilot project meant to continue only on a trial basis until 2014. By 2023, the Peak incentive has been prolonged three times but still not made permanent.<sup>10</sup>

Another aspect in which the education system returned to former ideas was in response to a critique for having become too loosely organised, too open, and too general (SNAE 2011:12). In response, in the last reform of the analysis from 2011, revised in 2022, the three main policy documents, the education act, the curricula for elementary school and the curricula for upper secondary school and syllabi including the grading criteria were all revised. One of the aims was to move back toward a slightly more regulated and organisationally differentiating system at the same time as democracy, equity and inclusion continued to be valued (SNAE 2011, see further Chapter 8).

In August 2014, the Swedish Government commissioned the two official educational authorities SNAE (*Skolverket*) in collaboration with SPSM to produce a document to support schools in teaching gifted students (Utbildningsdepartementet [Ministry of Education] 2014). The production of this document was motivated in the Education Act of 2010 (2010:800) in particular the right of all children to be: “guided and stimulated [...] to develop as far as possible in line with their circumstances and the goal of education”

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<sup>10</sup>See SNAE (2019a) *The Report by the Committee Investigating Students Who More Rapidly Reach the Knowledge Requirements* (my translation) (Dnr: 2019:01132)

and to allow them to continue to learn (2010:88 Ch. 3, 3§). In addition, the production was motivated by the same study by Persson (2010) as quoted in the introduction to this thesis and his critical description of gifted students and their experiences of education in Sweden. The commission briefly states that "[a]ll students should have the right to reach as far as possible in their knowledge development, including gifted students" (Utbildningsdepartementet [Ministry of Education] 2014:2)

In a report summarising their work SNAE describes three principal components of the motivation behind the report. Firstly, the identification of a pressing need for more knowledge concerning gifted students (SNAE 2015a). Secondly, the essential recognition of gifted students as being understimulated, subject to long absences from school, and being misdiagnosed as having ADHD. Finally, the authority describes a joint requirement of implementing the document at all levels of education and addressing giftedness in university teacher-training programmes. This document, produced in response to the commission is the first document that officially acknowledges that there is place for giftedness in Swedish education (see further Chapter 9).

To conclude, out of the dividing factors the educational reforms intended to resolve, some of the gender issues were addressed by making education accessible for female students, meaning the education system gradually became more accepting of both genders. From the 1970's gender equality has been stated in policy as a significant goal of education (c.f Lgr 69) (which is not the same as saying the education system of today is without gender issues). The divide between rural and urban conditions improved by a large expansion in number of schools. In 1909 there were 38 schools offering further education in all of Sweden. In 1968 with the new reform these increased to more than 249 schools (SCB 1969). Today, there are approximately 1,300 upper secondary schools spread around the country (SKR 2021). Nevertheless, throughout the history of the reform process, it becomes clear firstly how exclusive education was and how important social class was as a barrier against admitting to education students categorised as of the wrong type, and secondly, how other aspects fell behind in the debate, such as how to nurture ability independently of class (Dahllöf 1967, Marklund 1985:30).

## Policy in The International Baccalaureate - a Challenging line of Education

In addition to national education, contributing to the educational context in Sweden is the presence of the IB Diploma Programme. As mentioned in the introduction, the inclusion of the IB in this thesis is motivated by its identification in research as a suitable educational alternative in challenging gifted students. The following section will introduce some of the basic principles in policy regulating IB education. Just like in the Swedish national education system, programme structure, subject content of the IB programmes are found in curriculum and in syllabi. These texts will be referred to in the analysis in Part 3. Instead, what will be reviewed here are texts focused on the role of the teacher and the characterisation of the student – two of the thematical aspects of the thesis. Moreover, the section intends to clarify the IB's views on inclusion, diversity, and ability and what the challenging components of the Diploma Programme might be.

### Approaches to learning and teaching in the IB

The International Baccalaureate (IB) is a non-profit international education organisation founded in Geneva in 1968 providing a set of curricula and assessment machinery from Kindergarten to Upper Secondary level. From the beginning the aim has been to provide a consistent education system for children who during their school years have to move between countries, but also to encourage international understanding (Peterson 1987, Chapter 2). In the Diploma Programme (aimed at students between 16 to 19 years old) students study six subjects distributed between the humanities, natural sciences, linguistics and/or literature, mathematics and aesthetics. The former director of the Department of Educational Studies at Oxford University and the first Director-General of the IB, Alec Peterson, explains that the intention behind such a structure is to include a diverse group of students with interests and skills in a variety of subjects, while explicitly avoiding the creation of “a super-college bound’ elite” (Peterson 1987:34). Instead, the IB describes itself as offering “challenging programmes” (The IB Mission Statement) based on “a healthy appetite for learning and excellence” (IB, *About the IB*) and for students “to develop to their fullest potential” (IB 2015b:7).

The “rigorous” assessment system in the IBDP (The IB Mission Statement) may also be seen as challenging. 80 percent of the IBDP students’ grade is externally and anonymously assessed based on a set of unseen examinations at the end of their two-year studies. The other 20 percent of the grade is based on Internal Assessments which are externally moderated, and which are completed according to a centrally set schedule of deadlines. This means that the

role of the teacher is not primarily providing summative assessments but rather to act as a coach and guide towards the exam.<sup>11</sup>

From a policy perspective, it is possible to say that the IB communicates the topics in focus of the analysis at two levels. On the one hand, there are text examples presenting key learning aspects at a macro-level, while at a micro-level, these more overarching goals are clarified closer to the individuals' everyday experiences as students and teachers. At micro-level, a document of relevance is *Approaches to Learning* (ATL) from 2015. The emphasis here is on skills the IB intends to support in their students, at the same time as making the students aware of factors which may affect them in their learning, both short and long-term. For example, stated as part of developing *communication skills* is to be able to present orally in front of other people, which according to the text means the students need developing strategies to overcome inhibiting feelings of discomfort and anxiety. Similarly, *self-management skills* include both organisational skills and affective skills, to learn how to avoid procrastination, stress and 'last minute panic', while *Social skills* mean the students are expected to be "aware of the impact of their behaviour on others" and to develop "the ability to regulate their own emotions and behaviours" (IB 2015a).

Worth noticing in these examples is the amount of responsibility that is placed on the students in these matters, as the document ascribe the students' ownership of their mood, their behaviour, and their ability to control themselves. The teacher's role in these descriptions, on the other hand, is "to enable the students to gain some control" for example "over their mood, their motivation, and their ability to deal effectively with setbacks and difficulties" (IB 2015a). Furthermore, the teacher is defined as an "intellectual leader who can empower the students to develop the confidence and personal responsibility needed to deepen understanding" and to "learn how to learn" (IB 2015b:9).

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<sup>11</sup> The examination process is organised according to subject and consist of a team of examiners and a chief examiner. To guarantee that grading standards are consistent within the system the examiners are organised in a chain of moderation. For the grading of the internal assessments, the teachers have to set predicted grades and a sample is selected for moderation. The teachers also report predicted grades to the IB organisation. When the final results of the external marking are published, the predicted grades by the teachers are compared to the final marks giving indications to the teachers of their standards in relation to the IB-markers.

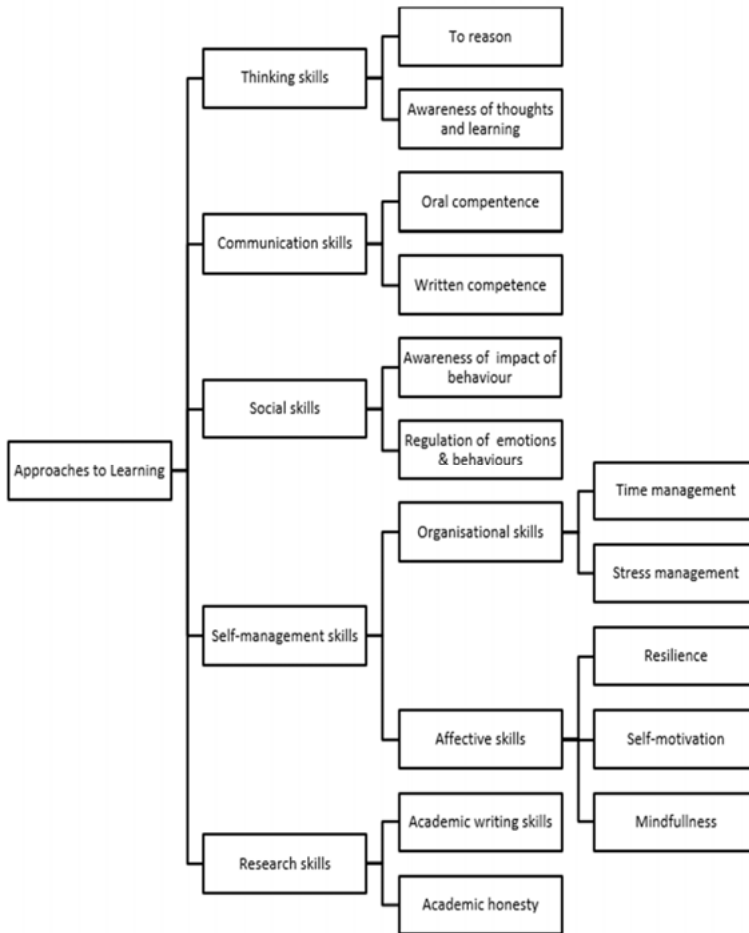


Figure 2:1 Approaches to Learning

Most clearly, such a perspective is expressed in a distinction made between *pedagogy* defined as “the art and science of teaching children” and *andragogy* meaning “the art and science of helping adults learn”. It is stated: “[w]hen considering teaching strategies suitable for DP students aged 16 to 19 it may be useful to move towards more andragogical approaches, in order to design teaching more appropriately matched to the developmental stage of the students” (IB 2015b:23). At the same time, part of that teaching role is defined as not to go along with the student. Rather, in guiding the students it is claimed it might mean to go against their wishes. In the conclusion of the ATL-document it is stated:

The key consideration for students is not which teaching methods they enjoyed most, but which were most effective in helping them understand, remember, and learn that particular subject matter. This in itself is a big step forward in

metacognitive development for students—to separate pleasure from effectiveness in order to better identify their own best ways of learning.[...] Establishing this kind of metacognitive awareness creates what Dweck (2008) calls her “growth mindset”, characterized by the belief that learning improvement is a function of effort and strategy use, and that both of these things are within the student’s control (IB 2015a, emphasis in original).

Another example of role distribution is found in *self-management skills*. Of particular interest is the way motivation, described as *self-motivation*, in combination with *resilience* not only is seen as the basis of successful learning but also as something which cannot be given to the students from the outside. Instead, it is claimed to come from within the students themselves. Here, motivation is directly related to education that offers challenges: “created by goals that are not too easy or too difficult” (IB 2015a). In combination with being resilient, it is stated: “For the resilient learner, any challenge entails the possibility of failure and frustration, but it is this possibility that makes the challenge interesting and intrinsically motivating” (IB 2015a). In connection to motivation and resilience, the document also introduces ‘risk-taking’, the importance of risking a failure and relate to mistakes as learning opportunities. The text reads (first reference in original): “Far from being a sign of intellectual inferiority, the capacity to err is crucial to human cognition’ (Schulz 2011: 5). Risk-taking is therefore closely linked to the idea of failing well” (IB 2015a).

In summary, judging by what is stated in the IB policy texts, on the one hand the IB student could be characterised as someone who should expect to be challenged and to take responsibility for his or her own learning. The role of the teacher, on the other hand, is described as to challenge the students and support them in developing a sense of autonomy and self-direction in their learning. In turn, that is what is said to *influence motivation* - not for the teacher to motivate the students. This characterisation of the student, the role of the teacher and the relationship between motivation and failure we will come back to in the analysis as it points the IB teachers in a different direction to that in the national policy documents.

## The IB, inclusion, ability, and elitism

At the same time as emphasising the challenging elements of the IB education, the IB organisation also requests local policies for inclusion to be developed at the individual school. This document should take into consideration the need to make adjustments to address students of diverse abilities. One such aspect is in linguistic proficiency. Since the programme is offered only in one of the official languages, English, Spanish, or French, it means to support students in taking on studies as non-native speakers.

In terms of adjustments according to ‘special needs’ the policy document *Learning Diversity and Inclusion in the IB Programmes – Removing Barriers to Learning* (2016) instead refers to ‘learner variability’. This is defined as:

[A] term that embraces all students and does not exclude on the grounds of strengths, challenges, age, social status, economic status, language, gender, race, ethnicity, or sexuality. Taking into account changing histories, circumstances and contexts, learner variability represents the shifting combination of strengths and challenges that learners experience. Within this understanding it is recognized that there is no average brain and thus no average student. Learner variability upholds that categorizing students according to diagnostic labels (ADHD, dyslexia, and so on) does not provide sound indicators of a student’s potential or appropriate teaching strategies (IB 2016:3).

The thought behind such a lexicalisation is described a little further down in the same document:

In line with the IB’s commitment to inclusive education, students are considered in terms of their strengths. The IB has moved away from the use of deficit labels to identify students and instead considers the areas of challenge that a student may experience: reading; writing; mathematics; social and emotional learning and behaviour; mental health and psychological well-being; speech, language and communication; vision; hearing; giftedness; physical; and medical/illness (IB 2016:12).

Neither is the term ‘special education’ mentioned. Instead, the document refers to ‘differentiated instruction’ and ‘access arrangements’. To maintain a fair assessment, it is stated the arrangements do not decrease the expectations on the students or “compensate for lack of ability” (IB 2016:27). For example, in grading the Internal Assessments: “marks must always be awarded based on the candidate’s work in accordance with the assessment criteria. Under no circumstances must teachers consider other factors such as the candidate’s challenges or difficulties” (IB 2018a:5). Instead, the task is to “provide the optimal support to address challenges and to enable the students to work around them” (IB 2018a:4).

If this is how the IB defines its responsibilities in relation to learners of a variety of linguistic backgrounds and different abilities, what can then be said about the IB in relation to socio-economic factors? In a study, Doherty and Shield (2012) show that the way IB is positioned in relation to state versus privately financed education varies between countries. For example, in 2011 as much as 89 percent of the IB schools in the US were state financed. Similar figures were published from Canada (84 percent) while in UK the result came to 64 percent. In contrast, in Australia, only 18 percent of the IB schools were publicly financed which means it is predominantly associated with private education. Concerning the UK, Outhwaite and Ferri (2017) describe how the former Prime Minister Tony Blair, argued that since the IB prepares students

well for university studies, it should be made accessible for more students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. According to Outhwaite and Ferri, this changed when there was a change in government. As a result, the majority of schools that continue to offer the IB Diploma are in the private sector. In the article, Outhwaite and Ferri are critical of this development, but attribute the responsibility for the changes to UK national education politics and not to the IB.

However, there are other examples of how the IB is used as a way to increase access to higher education for diverse students. The US accounts for 40 percent of all IB schools. Resnik (2015) describes how most of these schools are so called ‘magnet schools’ which mean they are publicly financed and placed in inner-city areas to be available to low-income and socially disadvantaged groups but also to attract students from more affluent backgrounds. According to Resnik, the idea to do so is sprung out of the reports *A Nation at Risk* (1983) and the *No Child Left Behind* act from 2001 which stress the importance of finding talented students from a variety of backgrounds and to make sure their abilities are noticed and developed. In summary, what this means is that the IB has different connotations in different countries depending on political priorities, the dynamics of education politics, and whether the schools are publicly or privately funded.

Even though aspiring to such an inclusive commitment, there are indications of how the IB in Sweden has been categorised in exclusive terms. One example of such a view is found at the level of government and Bill 1992/:158 concerning financial support to cover some of the additional expenses included in offering the IB programme. In the bill, the IB is described as a form of education recruiting only from the elite, and something which will never expand in Sweden, “since it is such a demanding form of education” (Government Bill 1992/93:158, 21). When the bill was written the IB was offered only in three schools in Sweden. Two of these were in publicly financed school buildings, but where the IB programme depended on private funding, and one at the very few privately funded boarding schools. Around the millennium shift the number of IBDP schools in Sweden expanded and as mentioned according to recent figures include 29 schools (IB *Find an IB School* 2022). With three exceptions, these schools are all publicly financed. As a result, in the majority of cases to study the IB programme in Sweden, just like upper secondary education in general, is free of charge which means it does not restrict students from applying to the programme due to financial reasons.

## Conclusion

To conclude this chapter on context, in the parallel school system students were denied access to education because of geography, gender and class. To integrate the systems and to increase equity have been the primary aims of the

200 years of reform work covered in the exploration. As a result, the Swedish national education system of today can be categorised as based on late differentiation, an emphasis on structures to support students in need and to provide wide access to university studies. In contrast, the IB from 1977 and the Peak Programmes from 2009 explicitly offer challenges to the students but also offer a different perspective on some of the structures of the education system grown out of the reform process. For example, in the policy documents regulating the IB education the role of the teacher is expressed in terms of challenges and to guide the IB student in taking responsibility for their learning. Instead of greatest possible unity it differentiates and specialises with the goal of higher education in mind, the degree is based on a final exam, and it has a name which symbolises the laureate of classical education, something that was taken away in the national system. Despite this, there are also features in common between the two systems in terms of core values, since both systems argue for diversity and inclusion. Instead, it is in the categorisation of students and the role of the teacher the two systems differ. What effect this may have for the conceptualisation of giftedness will be addressed further in the analysis of the national policy documents in Part 2, the teacher interviews in Part 3 and the concluding discourse analysis in Part 4.

## Chapter 3: Previous Research and Definitions

This next chapter presents a summary of previous research on giftedness starting with research in Sweden and then moving on to a systematic review of international research. The chapter also includes a discussion on definitions of significance for the thesis: the core concept giftedness, identification methods, and what here is meant by gifted education.

### Swedish Research on Giftedness

Roland S. Persson, quoted in the introduction, is one of the most prominent researchers in Sweden on the topic of giftedness. A recurring focus of his work has been the tension between equity and excellence particularly within the context of the Swedish school system (see for example Persson 1998, 2000, 2005, 2014). In his book, *In a Different Land – the Psychology of Giftedness* (1997, Persson’s translation) Persson presents a review of the status of giftedness in a selection of school systems from around the world. The book details a global interest in investing educational resources in both students who struggle and gifted students, but points to a failure of the Swedish system to provide for the latter, despite investing one of the world’s highest percentages of GDP in education (Persson 1997). Another area of research centres on what giftedness is and what it means to be gifted. In this book he first presents the Swedish giftedness concept ‘*särbegåvning*’ which he applies to a person who “continues to surprise by way of approaching and applying knowledge” and who has “an exceptional ability in a number of areas, such as in performances, activities and functions” (Persson 1997:25, my translation). Persson states giftedness can be found in a variety of domains, such as in sports, communication, academic studies, language, the arts, and technical areas. Additionally, he emphasises how such abilities do not apply to all individuals, a claim that has generated some resistance, as we will see later in the thesis.

In addition to the contribution of Persson research in matters to do with giftedness is still limited. In total, four full doctoral theses have been defended in Sweden. The first to be published was *The Study Situation for Mathematically Gifted Students* (2011) by Eva Pettersson. In her work, she criticises the claims that highly able students are privileged, belong to an elite, and manage well in school. She refutes these assumptions through a detailed study of math-

ematically gifted students in Sweden and their study situations. Methodologically, Pettersson uses a combination of longitudinal case studies with students and a teacher survey. She identifies the teacher as a significant actor and finds some constraining factors influencing the support given to gifted students. These are both at the level of the individual teachers, such as uncertainties in definition of giftedness, and uncertainty in identifying gifted students, but also at a systemic level in the form of absence of support in policy documents, and a lack of an action plan to support teachers in their teaching of these students.

Moreover, Pettersson identifies a discrepancy between teaching strategies confirmed in previous research as beneficial, and the actual teaching strategies applied by the teachers. The reason behind the difference she ascribes to the effect of established social norms. One such norm is the assumption that gifted students must adjust to the abilities of the group in general, i.e. to do the same activities in class as everybody else. When the gifted students then fail to conform, Pettersson claims it is interpreted as a social inability on the behalf of the students, instead of a consequence of a lack of stimulation. Other procedures taken as norms specifically in the teaching of Mathematics are for the students to work in silence, and only on materials in textbooks. According to Pettersson, both arrangements conflict with known benefits of an inquiry-based method, which means to generate challenging questions, and to be receptive to what the students say and do. Since such a method is meant to follow the students, rather than making them follow pre-planned materials, Pettersson claims this strategy may also be challenging for the teacher. In response, she concludes by emphasising the importance of gifted students gaining “additional help from mathematically competent mentors or special needs teachers” (Pettersson 2011:252).

The second study from a Swedish setting is by Linda Mattsson, *Tracking Mathematical Giftedness in an Egalitarian Context* and was published in 2013. Mattsson aims to identify areas in need of ‘improvement’ for mathematically gifted students at upper secondary level. Like Pettersson, she uses a combination of methods, consisting of a survey to Head teachers, interviews with teachers teaching mathematics, and an analysis of assessments in mathematics. Mattsson argues there is an agreement between the teachers’ descriptions of mathematically gifted students and attributes mentioned in previous research, such as “creative ability, problem solving ability [...] an ease for learning mathematics”, and “keen motivation” (Mattsson 2013:61), but also that the teachers have difficulties in describing what these attributes are in any greater detail. She then claims that limited understanding leads to limited provision and that teachers need to “further their knowledge about the different abilities contributing to manifestations of mathematical giftedness.” (Mattsson 2013:64).

As the title of her thesis indicates, Mattsson is interested in the tension between equity and excellence. In her approach, she analyses patterns in demographic data of students enrolled in upper secondary programmes specialised

in mathematics and in Peak Programmes (*Spetsutbildning* in Mattsson's work translated as 'Cutting-edge Programme'). Mattsson claims her sample presents a traditional view of self-maintained, high-performing, male students from educated families but she also identifies examples of how these students refuse to follow standardised procedures and have difficulties fully expressing their thoughts in writing. Like both Persson and Pettersson before her, she thereby questions the view of gifted students as necessarily privileged and self-contained. In her conclusion, Mattsson identifies six areas in need of improvement. These include:

- a need for gifted students to receive legal recognition in national policy,
- a need to identify students to gain access to guidance and stimulation,
- a need to include gifted students as a topic in formal teaching training,
- a strengthening of research and its implementation
- a need for a national agency to coordinate issues to do with gifted education
- a need to take gifted students social and emotional requirements into consideration (Mattson 2013).

The third thesis published in Sweden is *Mathematical Abilities and Mathematical Memory during Problem Solving and Some Aspects of Mathematics Education for Gifted Pupils* (2017) by Attila Szabo. As in the two previous studies, Szabo addresses both matters of definition of mathematical giftedness, and how giftedness is recognised in educational provision in the form of pedagogical and organisational practices. In a research review of international research, he specifically studies enrichment programmes, differentiated instruction in regular classrooms, and ability grouping and their impact on students' ability development and motivation. Szabo concludes that despite some tangible benefits, merely making such adjustments is insufficient since the outcome depends on a number of additional factors. He identifies these as student's voluntary participation, that content of teaching is adapted to the students' capacity, that tasks are challenging (offer depth rather than breadth), and that the students are monitored by engaged and knowledgeable teachers. Like the previous mentioned research, his research places the teachers in the centre; theirs is the responsibility to analyse conditions behind certain practices before judging their suitability as ways to improve learning situations for gifted students (Szabo 2017).

In 2018 Elisabet Mellroth defended the most recent previous PhD thesis in Sweden on giftedness with the title: *Harnessing Teachers' Perspectives: Recognizing Mathematically Highly Able Pupils and Orchestrating Teaching for*

*them in a Diverse Ability Classroom*. Like the previous studies, Mellroth focuses on the teacher as a significant actor. One of her aims is to find strategies that will help teachers identify and support high-ability students. Rather than explore how research can support teachers, Mellroth turns this around and asks how experiences by teachers in the regular classroom can be used in research to develop theories on how to educate high-ability students. She also engages in a discursive analysis of rights and obligations as perceived by teachers, which according to her, influence the teachers' sense of their possibilities to act. Founded on 'positioning theory' by Harré from 2012, she investigates the tripartite relationship between what the teachers sense they can say, what they can do, and what they are permitted to do. Judging by what the teachers say about their own practices, Mellroth concludes that they are conscious of a duty to differentiate, a right to assess students in more than one way and a right to teach mathematically highly able students. They also admit to having a duty to know how to recognise mathematical giftedness, which in Mellroth's analysis translates into a right to professional development in matters concerning mathematically high-ability students (Mellroth 2018).

To summarise, the four theses exhibit a common focus on gifted education and mathematics, and, in particular the central role of the teacher. All four researchers identify common constraints in a of lack of knowledge and understanding of what mathematical giftedness is, how it can be identified and consequently what adjustments need to be made to satisfy teaching and learning objectives for these students. Three of the researchers take these limitations further and address what could be described as constraining factors other than lack of knowledge. Pettersson points to the influence of social norms, Mattsson, to the tension between equity and giftedness, and Mellroth to the teachers' perception of their possibilities to act. Relating these findings to the current thesis, all four writers identify values that influence the teachers' possibilities, or sense of possibility to act, but none of them trace the origin of these values to official education policy. This is something that the current thesis aims to do. Moreover, as all previous work here concerns mathematics there is a need to broaden the scope to encompass non-mathematical studies.

Since publication, the four theses have been cited in other research<sup>12</sup>. While some of these citations are made by the other national researchers, only a few references are made in international studies (Haataja et al. 2020, Mazza 2023, Smedsrud 2019, Pangrcic 2016, Weng et al. 2018). Instead, most citations are found in works on giftedness by undergraduate student teachers. In many of these a strong emphasis is placed on the role of the teacher and on teaching in mathematics.

Four recent studies have contributed to the field nationally. Malin Ekesryd Nordström has published two articles as part of her dissertation work on early

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<sup>12</sup> As visualised in google scholar. Citations vary between 141 to 31 (Search date: 2023-06-26).

identification of gifted students as a pre-requisite for a positive school experience (submitted). In the first from 2021, she investigates perceptions of giftedness in a sample of preschool teachers (N=78). Limited resources are found to play a significant role in agreement with the findings of the four thesis works. For example, the respondents report a lack of time to attend to gifted children, a lack of suitable teaching material and a lack in formal teacher training concerning giftedness. She concludes there is a tension between statements in policy about every child's right to individualised teaching and a sense that support should primarily be given to students in difficulties. She argues that the latter means there is a risk of generating inequalities which undermines the principles underlying the Education Act (Ekesryd Nordström 2021).

In a second article, Ekesryd Nordström (2022) continues her study of the conceptualisation of giftedness by teachers in preschool and by Heads of Preschools. In the responses, she identifies three primary dilemmas: identifying gifted children without singling out the individual students, children identified as gifted but at the same time seen as lacking in some respect, such as in social or emotional skills, and the dilemma between the collective and the individual. According to Ekesryd Nordström these dilemmas come about through a tension between equity and elitism and lack of guidance in policy, even if such texts can be construed as open for interpretation.

The combination of giftedness and early childhood education has also been investigated by Valarie Margrain (2021). Margrain discusses how giftedness can be identified already in very young children and how activities in kindergarten can be organised. Margrain argues that this is important because gifted children come from a variety of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds and should have the possibility of an adequate education in school. The kindergarten teacher should be prepared to meet and support them in their "intellectual and personal development" (Margrain 2021:136).

Finally, the most recent study published from Sweden is by Lena Ivarsson (2023) who has investigated Heads of School in Sweden and their perceptions of gifted students. The responses in her survey study (N=71) indicate some ambivalence. For example, 70% of the respondents acknowledged that resources should be invested in gifted students and students in need of additional support alike and that gifted students are currently under-stimulated. At the same time, around 50% claimed that gifted students do not waste their time when taught in regular classes and that special education should be directed to children in need of additional support. Ivarsson states, there was a general positive attitude towards giftedness but, like former national researchers, there is uncertainty and a lack of knowledge among the respondents in what giftedness is and how such students should be taught. For example, the respondents expressed an awareness of the existence of strategies, such as acceleration and ability grouping, but uncertainty in how, and if, these strategies should be applied. Instead, the most common conception found was that gifted students should be taught in the regular classroom through regular resources. Ivarsson

concludes that this ambivalence is “worrisome, as knowledge about gifted students and their education is essential for Principals to create conditions for a school that are inclusive and effective” (Ivarsson 2023:5).

In sum, the common themes in the research field of giftedness and education in Sweden are a lack in knowledge and uncertainty in what giftedness is and how to teach gifted students. The teacher is identified by research as a significant agent together with the Head of School. In all studies, including those by Persson, the reason for supporting gifted students is given as a focus on their personal development and connected to the well-being of these students and their right to be stimulated and challenged in school.

## Giftedness in International Research

In addition to national research, to attain a better insight also into international research on giftedness, a research review was conducted in the spring of 2017. The work was guided by the SMART approach, which stands for *Systematic Mapping and Analysis of Research Topographies* (Nilholm, 2017). The review focused on finding what issues are debated within the field, what are the recurring theories about giftedness, and what concepts are used.

In this particular review, the sample was selected from the Web of Science and Scopus databases and focused on the 20 most cited articles (Nilholm 2017) written in English for either of the four topic field searches: “giftedness AND educat\*”, “giftedness AND teach\*”, “giftedness AND inclusion”, “giftedness AND ‘special education’”. After verifying that no article was included more than once, the sample consisted of 91 articles published between 1979 and 2017. In June 2023, the same search was made for comparison covering articles between 2002 and 2023 using the same search criteria. This generated another 23 articles and a total sample of 114 articles.

The texts were read inductively in their entirety and the content categorised and noted down generating a list of recurring topics. As the reading progressed new observations either resulted in the addition of new categories or noted down as examples in already existing categories. For example, one topic that reoccurred (described in more detail below) was ‘Identification Methods’ used to identify gifted students. From the beginning, the topic included the category ‘test-based methods’ which was further refined to include ‘IQ tests’, ‘ability tests’, ‘Personality tests’. The topic was then extended to include examples of ‘non-test-based methods’ for example ‘interviews and ‘observations’. After the reading was completed the number of examples in each category were counted generating an overview of how frequently they appeared in the sample as a whole. In the following, the exact articles covering a specific point in the analysis have been omitted from the text, to increase readability. Instead, particular studies have been selected as significant and representing specific

points in the research field. Other than that, the results are reported in quantitative terms to indicate how common a certain topic or theory was out of the total. At the end of the thesis, there is a complete list of references for the texts in the sample, separate from the other references.

## Giftedness defined?

The most frequently occurring topic in the sample was how to define giftedness. These definitions fell into a broad binary tree structure. The primary distinction is between those definitions that rely essentially on logical or mathematical ability as measured in a standard IQ test, for example an IQ of between 130 and 140 and above, and those that do not. In this latter camp there are two further categories: those definitions that regard giftedness to be to the possession of a multifaceted array of personal abilities and those that depend on a specific model of giftedness. For example, there were 47 articles referring to Joseph Renzulli's *Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness*, which at first blush can be categorised as a definition depending on personal qualities but which possesses some further complexity as described in more detail below. Similarly, creativity features in those studies that reference Robert Sternberg's work and theories by Mihály Csikszentmihályi, which were referred to in 41 and 18 articles respectively. 32 references were made to François Gagné's *DMGT-model*, also described in more detail below and 31 of the articles referred directly to Howard Gardner's *Frames of Mind* from 1983 in which he presents his model of multiple intelligences.

Earlier conceptions of giftedness tend to see it as something exclusively dependent on genetic factors, for example in the work of Lewis Terman<sup>13</sup>, the first person to use the term giftedness in his research in 1925, and the sociologist and statistician Francis Galton from 1869 and his descriptions of genius (Dai 2010:8ff). However, none of the articles in the SMART sample portrayed such a traditional view. Rather there was a distinction between articles that saw giftedness as something depending both on nature and the environment (8 articles) and those that regarded it as a purely social construction (7 articles), or even a purely political construction (5 articles). An example, of the latter is Oakes et al. (1997) "Detracking: The Social Construction of Ability, Cultural Politics, and Resistance to Reform". The article is theoretically based on work by Pierre Bourdieu and claims that ability grouping is based on elitist premises and therefore applied in education simply to divide students for political reasons. In the sample as a whole, this article stands out as the only one making such a claim.

Two of the articles in the sample, by Barab and Plucker (2002) and by Ziegler and Phillipson (2012), critique this traditional divide between ability as originating in either nature or nurture. Instead, they see the individual and

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<sup>13</sup> Lewis Terman is also the inventor of the Stanford-Binet intelligence scale.

the environment as a unit of extended and situated cognition, meaning that a person thinks by the help of the environment. To exemplify, Barab and Plucker refer firstly to a study by Saxe from 1992 investigating the connection between the environment and mathematical ability. In focus of his study were children working at a Brazilian market required to perform a number of arithmetic calculations as part of the work. When the same calculations were required as part of their regular schoolwork in a classroom environment performed using the usual symbolic algorithm the children's performance was significantly worse. The conclusion is that the material context is significant to the cognitive task. A similar situation occurred in a second study where a child performed at a high level in keeping track of league tables and scoring results as long as he was in the actual bowling hall, but again failed to do the same thing in a maths test. Barab and Plucker use these examples to question internalist definitions of giftedness such as those based on IQ and suggest that ability is a feature of person-environment transactions hence casting doubt on the effectiveness of tests to reveal giftedness.

Related to this study is the idea that there are inhibiting factors in the environment that impede the definition or discovery of giftedness. These were factors such as personal circumstances or environmental factors such as lack of support by family or teachers, and lack of access to adequate educational provisions. The most common category (29 articles) refers to insufficient identification methods and 25 articles referred to insufficient educational provision. 27 articles refer directly to socio-economic factors; 21 articles discussed marginalisation due to race, 18 articles discussed 'twice-exceptionality'<sup>14</sup>, while 6 articles addressed the role of gender in identification exemplified in under-identification of female students in STEM-subjects.<sup>15</sup> 12 articles mentioned the effect of accusations of elitism as inhibiting.

The 'personal quality' category of definitions of giftedness included articles that relied on the possession of a personal quality that was judged to be in some sense 'above average'. For example, the gifted person was able to learn faster or earlier, at a deeper level, or through exceptional problem-solving ability, creativity, originality, and an unusual high level of meta-cognition, compared to the average. Some articles also referred to personality traits including strong levels of motivation, curiosity, humour and risk-taking. In the sample as a whole, more than 70 different criteria were proposed covering a number of different abilities and traits as presented in the list below.

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<sup>14</sup> Twice exceptionality, or 2E means the child is categorised as both gifted and having some difficulties in learning, such as dyslexia or ADHD.

<sup>15</sup> STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IQ above 130-140</li> <li>▪ Multi-facetted</li> <li>▪ Academic abilities</li> <li>▪ Physical abilities</li> <li>▪ Aesthetic abilities</li> <li>▪ High level of creativity</li> <li>▪ Strong motivation</li> <li>▪ A combination of nature- nurture</li> <li>▪ Purely a political construction to maintain elitism</li> <li>▪ Task commitment</li> <li>▪ Strong leadership skills</li> <li>▪ Exceptional ability to solve logical problems</li> <li>▪ Exceptional problem finding-ability</li> <li>▪ Novelty in thinking</li> <li>▪ A strong sense of humour</li> <li>▪ Extensive Meta-cognitive ability</li> <li>▪ Risk-takers</li> <li>▪ Have had a 'crystalized experience'</li> <li>▪ Quick ability to learn</li> <li>▪ A strong moral conviction, sense of justice</li> <li>▪ Presence of over-excitability</li> <li>▪ Preference to be in charge of their own learning</li> <li>▪ Preference to work independently</li> <li>▪ Choses useful learning strategies</li> <li>▪ Strong ability to adapt</li> <li>▪ Excellent action repertoire</li> <li>▪ High level of performance</li> <li>▪ Intellectual playfulness</li> <li>▪ Strong ability for sequential processing</li> <li>▪ Strong ability for simultaneous processing</li> <li>▪ Perfectionism</li> <li>▪ High level of emotional sensitivity</li> <li>▪ Adaptable personality</li> <li>▪ Strong sense of self-esteem</li> <li>▪ Socially very able</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Curious</li> <li>▪ Can see something from many different perspectives</li> <li>▪ Bored/uninterested</li> <li>▪ Competitive</li> <li>▪ Socially immature, maladjusted</li> <li>▪ Loners</li> <li>▪ Ask abstract, complex questions</li> <li>▪ Passionate about learning</li> <li>▪ Vulnerable</li> <li>▪ Low self-esteem</li> <li>▪ Hypersensitive</li> <li>▪ High level of frustration</li> <li>▪ Anxious</li> <li>▪ Self-critical</li> <li>▪ Twice-exceptional</li> <li>▪ Early learning</li> <li>▪ Deep learning</li> <li>▪ Strong sense of responsibility</li> <li>▪ Intense will to have responsibilities</li> <li>▪ Extensive vocabulary</li> <li>▪ Speaks rapidly</li> <li>▪ Speaks fluently</li> <li>▪ Read books high above their age level</li> <li>▪ Maintain deep and long friendships</li> <li>▪ Sensitive to other peoples' problems</li> <li>▪ Helpful in finding solutions for other peoples' problems</li> <li>▪ Mild behavioural problems</li> <li>▪ Continuously asks new questions</li> <li>▪ Are able to read before school start</li> <li>▪ Transfer knowledge from one area to another</li> <li>▪ Strong sense of imagination</li> <li>▪ 5 % of the population</li> <li>▪ 3 % of the population</li> <li>▪ Superior problem-solving abilities, also social and emotional problems</li> <li>▪ Strong self-efficacy</li> <li>▪ Exceptionally good memory</li> </ul>
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Figure 3:1 List of Descriptors of Giftedness

## Identification

The second most recurring topic in the sample was a discussion of methods to identify giftedness, as evidenced in the article of Barab and Plucker. The need for identification stemmed either from the requirements of teaching or from

finding participants for the studies themselves. The most common suggestion was to use different types of tests (42 articles). 26 of these studies explicitly referred to the use of IQ-tests in selecting respondents, distributed between WISC (11), Raven-tests (6), the Stanford-Binet (5) and others (4). However, there were also articles present in the sample that critiqued reliance on test-based identification. In these articles, tests were complemented by other methods. In some of the articles, the more classical tests were contrasted by a variety of personality tests. In trying to avoid testing altogether, 22 articles discussed the possibility of relying on teacher recommendations for identification. At the same time, the limitations of this method were highlighted, primarily because it was thought to be too subjective and focused too much on high-performing students only and ignoring giftedness that was not accompanied by high performance. In total, only a few articles suggested avoiding all forms of quantitative measures and relying exclusively on qualitative identification methods. Of these there were 3 articles suggesting making observations, 2 articles suggesting the use of interviews and 4 articles suggesting the use of a portfolio as a basis for a continuous assessment of the students' abilities than would be the case in a single-instant test procedure.

Table 3:1 SMART Review: References to Theorists & Topics

Topics	Giftedness as multifaceted	Origin of giftedness	Inhibiting Factors	Identification Methods
N=114	Renzulli (47)	Nature & Nurture (8)	Insufficient identification methods (29)	Test based (42)/IQ tests (26)
	Sternberg (41)	Social construction (7)	Socio-economic factors (27)	Teacher recommendation (22)
	Gagné (32)	Political construction (5)	Insufficient educational provision (25)	Portfolio assessment (4)
	Gardner (31)	Extended & situated (2)	Under-identification due to race (21)	Observations (3)
	Csikszentmihályi (18)		Under-identification due to 2E (18)	Interviews (2)
			Accusation of elitism (12)	
		Under-identification due to gender (6)		

## Models of giftedness

An alternative to detecting personal qualities is a group of definitions that utilise models. One of the most frequently cited models has been mentioned already the 'Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness' by Joseph Renzulli, first presented in 1972. According to Renzulli, a person is gifted when there is a balance between three components: *above-average ability*, *task commitment* and

*creativity*, meaning a person is only referred to as gifted when all three characteristics overlap, as illustrated by the asterisk in the area in the centre of the diagram.



Figure 3:2 Renzulli's Three-Ring Conceptions of Giftedness  
(Renzulli, 2005, my adaptation).

By *above average-ability*, Renzulli means firstly general abilities of the person, but at an exceptionally high level. These are applicable across areas, such as verbal fluency, numerical reasoning, and memory. Secondly, he includes specific abilities by which he means a strong capacity to acquire knowledge or skills, and to perform a specialized activity, such as in the arts or in a school subject. Furthermore, he defines this level of ability as recognised through the person's capacity to process information and to adapt previous experiences in responding to new situations. This last factor is also what is recognised in his *creativity* component, as a person's ability to generate novelty, rather than merely repeating what has been learned. Thirdly, *task commitment*, according to Renzulli is the amount of energy, level of perseverance, hard work and dedicated practice people invest in developing their talents (Renzulli 2005).

The second model with high impact in the review was François Gagné and his 'Developmental Model of Giftedness and Talent' (DMGT) from 1985. In comparison to Renzulli's model, Gagné not only defines giftedness, but also explains in greater detail what is required for it to develop. He begins by distinguishing between, on the one hand, innate components which he calls *giftedness*, and on the other *talent* as in what abilities a person can develop from this endowment. Thereby, Gagné states the importance of hard work behind developing a talent and that even if you are born with certain predispositions not much else is given.

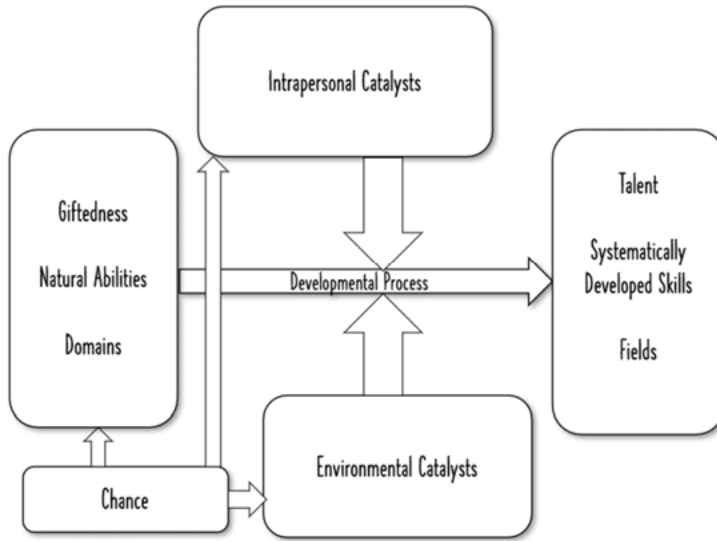


Figure 3:3 Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (Gagné, 2005, my adaptation)

In his description, Gagné not only focuses on what the talents are, but on factors that may have positive or negative impact on their development. Firstly, he describes what he calls *Intrapersonal Catalysts* by which he means personal qualities, such as mental strengths or sensitivities, temperament, maturity, and motivation. For example, it is likely someone with more patience will spend more time on tedious but necessary practice in comparison to a person lacking in such determination. Moreover, Gagné relates to the significance of physical strengths or limitations of the person. As examples, he mentions height, slenderness and leg length of a dancer, or hand span of a pianist. Secondly, Gagné defines *Environmental Catalysts* including socioeconomic factors and what opportunities, stimulation and support that meet the person. He directly points to the significance of educational provision, meaning access to stimulating teaching and guiding role models, as well as other types of support from the general surroundings, or lack thereof (Gagné 2005). Lastly, Gagné briefly mentions the role of chance. However, in later versions of his model he partially revises the inclusion of this component since he claims it can be seen as closely related to the environmental catalysts.

To summarise, it is possible to see how both models are linked to each other because of a content overlap, for example, in the way Renzulli's *task commitment* fits into Gagné's intrapersonal dimension, but also how Gagné extends it further by adding the significance of environmental factors. What the two models have in common is also that both expand the former definition of gift-

edness to include more than a high level of IQ. Still, both agree that the property of giftedness applies to a limited part of the population. To be able to indicate where such a borderline is drawn, IQ-levels according to normal distribution are brought back into the argument. Renzulli refers to a 20 percent prevalence rate while Gagné argues for 10 percent (Gagné 2005) which means a cut-off point for giftedness at around 2 SD from the norm. However, the question is what a precise prevalence rate contributes. One possible consequence may be that it generates an expectation on there being a certain number of students in a class, or a school that are gifted since according to these estimations there should be. Or, it may have the opposite effect of generating a sense of the quota being full, thereby neglecting to recognise additional gifted students. This leads us to another researcher in the sample who claims that gifted students should be taught without a definition and identification procedures all together.

In contrast to the two models stands James Borland's text "Gifted education without gifted children: the Case for No Conception of Giftedness" (2005), cited in 9 papers in the sample. Borland counters the argument for defining and identifying giftedness by stating that such a definition is actually 'a chimerica', and a social construction originating from 'the mental testing movement' in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With reference to Foucault (1995) and his 'technologies of power', Borland claims the use of methods like the IQ test is part of the state's knowledge-producing disciplines and an expression of a way of thinking where difference is important. He claims that such tests no other effect than to "classify, guide, group and as some have argued, control children" (Borland 2005:4). Instead, he argues it is more likely for gifted education to be realised if we were "to dispense with it" [the definition] altogether (Borland 2005:12). One of the reasons is the chain of thoughts linking giftedness to high IQ and further on to the misconception of elitism, anti-egalitarianism, and anti-democratic values which according to Borland has been a critique against gifted education from the beginning. Instead, Borland states, we should focus on differentiating teaching and make "education fairer and more effective" as in challenging and stimulating for all students, rather than focusing on whether a particular student is gifted or not or how to identify such a person (Borland 2005:13).

If this argument is analysed in more detail, it becomes clear that Borland does not deny the existence of students that, traditionally, could be placed in the 'gifted' category, but that this should not matter for the purposes of educational provision. He says: "I believe all students are equal in their right to and need for an appropriate education. I do not believe that what constitutes an appropriate education is the same for all students born in a given calendar year [and a] one-size-fits-all curriculum makes no more sense to me than would a one-size-fits-all shoe" (Borland 2005:1). On a related note, Peter Haug (1998), (not present in the sample) discusses a similar situation in the

case of special education. For Haug, giving a diagnosis of this kind (or definition in our case), is always situated relative to cultural values and norms rather than to a culture-independent 'objective' definition. The assessment procedures are based on expert judgements, which include structures where certain interpretations rather than others prevail (Haug 1998:16). Therefore, individuals are at risk of falling outside the boundaries of the definition if they are not considered to fulfil certain criteria, and thereby find their educational needs neglected. Haug argues also that the correspondence between diagnosis and educational needs is not always clear, and that it is possible to distinguish between on the one hand a pedagogical diagnosis, and on the other a causal diagnosis, where the first is not necessarily based on the second (Haug 1998:36). Combining the arguments by Borland and Haug would mean that it is enough to state that some students need far more challenging education, but without further concerns as to why. What contradicts such an approach is the text "Inclusion and Giftedness" by Border et al. (2014), also present in the sample, in which they argue that legal rights and allocation of resources is dependent on visibility, which presumes the need of a definition to work from. In the discussion of the thesis there will be reasons to return to this issue and what relevance it may have for the teachers' enactments of giftedness.

## Giftedness as a Cluster Concept

In spite of the variety of definitions, models and lists of criteria used to define giftedness, they share a common denominator in what the philosopher of science Hanne Andersen (2004) calls 'classical theories of concepts'. According to this way of thinking the application of a concept is seen as built up by a set of necessary and sufficient conditions governing how the concept should be applied. As a result, a borderline is drawn between examples to which the concept applies and those to which it does not apply (Andersen 2004:6). Despite such a definite distinction giving clarity, it results in a need to allow exceptions when the definition no longer applies. Andersen describes that a way of trying to solve this problem is by adding more necessary and sufficient conditions. Judging by the multitude of criteria aimed to define giftedness, this seems to be exactly what has happened. Andersen also points to the fact that, even if clear distinctions on the one hand might make something easy to categorise, on the other hand, it might not function all that well in practice, since complex areas are difficult to categorise in such a definite manner. Instead, she argues that in such a situation of complexity "what is needed is a theory of concepts that functions equally well inside and outside of sciences" something she calls an "open texture" (Andersen 2004:7-8). Andersen continues by referring to the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein who in 1953 did something similar when trying to find a definition in common for a disparate area. By

introducing the theory of ‘family resemblance’ he argues that just as in a biologically related family, there are features shared by members, such as hair colour, the shape of a nose, or eye colour. Even though the members resemble each other they do so without having any single feature in common in all of them (Wittgenstein 1953: P1, 66).

Continuing along the same line of thinking, one way the dilemmas in defining giftedness could be solved is to rethink the type of definition used and instead of a classical concept see it as a cluster concept which captures the same idea as that of family resemblance. An area where such a definition has been used previously is in the arts by Berys Gaut (2005). It can be agreed that architecture, painting, playing an instrument or dancing are all forms of art, but at the same time different, in other words, a clear example of a disparate area. The relationship between the criteria and the concept he explains as a cluster concept is built up by a *First condition* meaning that a) if all the properties in the criteria appear, the object belongs to the concept. However, if b) meaning fewer properties are present, is also enough for the concept to apply. As a *Second condition*, Gaut argues that c) no properties are individually necessary conditions for the object to be ‘it’, but as a *third Condition*, d) some of the properties must be present for ‘it’ to fall under the concept (Gaut 2005). Applied to the area of giftedness it would mean that giftedness consists of a selection of criteria where none on its own makes up a necessary condition for being gifted. Furthermore, to be categorised as gifted it is enough for the example to fulfil some of the criteria, but not any criteria in particular since there is no hierarchical structure between them.

For application in the thesis, I have constructed a cluster model with 11 categories. This was done by synthesising the most commonly recurring descriptors in giftedness research, as exemplified by the SMART analysis (see Figure 3.1 pg. 51). The model is meant as a dynamic tool for analysis open for a variety of different conceptualisations rather than as a definition of giftedness. This means that in the following analysis, a notion of giftedness is interpreted as being present when one or more of the following aspects are found:

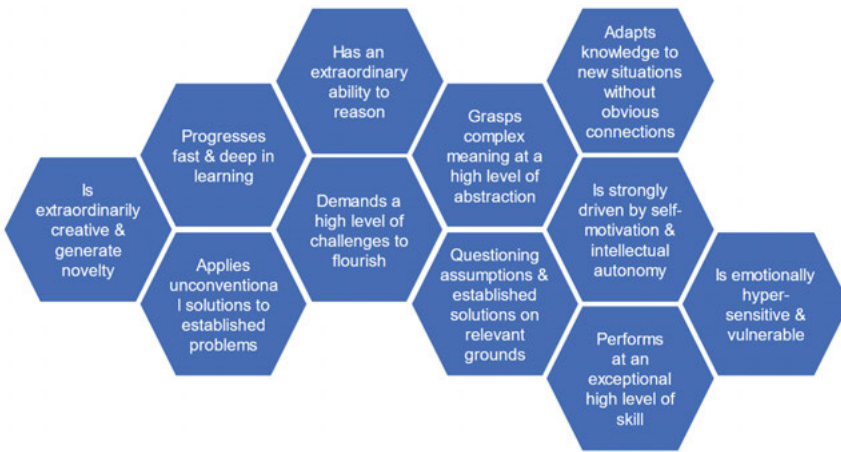


Figure 3:4 Giftedness as a Cluster Concept

In sum, as a tool for analysis the cluster concept is applied in this thesis for the following reasons. In relation to previously common identification methods of giftedness, it extends the definition by leaving behind dependency on a single necessary or sufficient condition (or set of conditions) as a sole definer of giftedness, such as a certain level of IQ (c.f. Dai 2010, Gardner 2011, Jung 2022). Thereby it extends the total number of combinations possible and indicates that giftedness can be seen in many ways depending on what descriptors apply (over 1000). In relation to the model by Renzulli presented above, in a cluster definition ‘task commitment’, or something similar, can be present as one of the aspects building up the cluster, meaning it may be related to in some examples in the data, but again it might not be present in all. In the same way, to perform at an exceptionally high level of skill is not a necessary condition for being interpreted as gifted, meaning the categorisations in the data can include high performance, but it can be otherwise.

Previous research has shown that some people are more resilient than others meaning that some will grow even under very hard conditions, while others might fade despite plenty of nourishment and support. One of the most extensive examples of the latter can be found in Joan Freeman’s 35-year longitudinal research into the lives of 210 gifted people, described partly in her book *Gifted Lives – What Happens when Gifted Children Grow Up* (2010) (see also Freeman 2008). Some of her participants described a happy childhood with plenty of support for their abilities, still it did not mean they developed their full potential as adults and continued to flourish. Instead, she gives examples of people finding it hard to master a university education, to find a stimulating job, to form a family and to find meaning in life. She writes:

When I hear people say glibly that the gifted can look out for themselves and that, like cream, they will always rise to the top of the milk, I want to tell them how it really is – how tortuous the road to excellence can be, and how it depends on so many things whether anyone can keep their foothold and stay on it.

She continues:

No matter how high your potential when you are born, the big barriers of poverty and social disapproval can wreak havoc in your life. To reach success and happiness you need opportunities – generous, appropriate learning material, good teaching, with consistent challenge, examples to follow, motivation for the long hours of practice and the personal courage to take a chance (Freeman 2010:10-11)<sup>16</sup>.

An issue I initially needed to solve in the current work was not only how to technically define giftedness, but also how it could be identified in education policy if the specific terms ‘giftedness’ or ‘gifted students’ are *not* mentioned. By using the cluster concept, the documents and teacher’s enactments may address aspects of the cluster, and thereby are interpreted as relating to giftedness. In practice, this could mean that some examples apply to a wide definition. Others, on the other hand may relate to rather narrow definition focusing on a few descriptors only, such as ‘an extraordinary ability to progress fast and to go deep in learning’, or to ‘perform with an exceptionally high level of skill’.

A further discussion on limitations and conceptual validity will follow in Chapter 5. However, as a final remark, giftedness will be described as something socially constructed, and as something that has come into being at a particular point in time – an idea that will be developed in the next chapter. At a glance, this condition may seem to be in opposition to the definition just given. Yet, to think about giftedness in such a polarised way, as either constructed or real, is a false distinction. Rather, it is to be thought about as a non-dichotomic continuum. The origin and outcome of this relationship could undoubtedly be discussed in great detail. However, I would like to limit the discussion to some

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<sup>16</sup> Another researcher arguing against a linear relationship between giftedness and high-performance is Shirley Kokot (1999 c.f in Wallström 2010:27). In her research she has presented a table which on the one hand describes characteristics of high-performers, and on the other, of students who are gifted. However, to treat the two categories as entirely separate is not the intention, as explained by Kokot in an email to the Swedish organisation Brainchild (2016). Kokot writes: “The table is not meant to be taken so seriously – it is merely an illustration of how less informed adults may mistakenly identify children as gifted on the grounds only of their good school results. I have a favourite saying that I use often: The gifted children are seldom those who achieve the highest marks on their school-leaving exam. Look more closely at the school failures, or those children who fool around at school. School results are not a reliable or valid judge of giftedness (Brainchild 2016)”.

brief remarks. A person who has presented a line of argument in the matter is the philosopher of science John Dupré. In his essay “What’s the Fuss about Social Construction” (2012) he emphasises how science is a shared and thereby a social activity, and secondly, how it is not given by nature but has come into being by the hands and minds of humans. In a rather straightforward manner, he claims: “Science is a massively cooperative, social enterprise. And surely it is constructed. Scientific knowledge doesn’t grow on trees; it is produced through hard work by human agents” (Dupré 2012:40). At the same time, he states that is not the same as saying that what is socially constructed is less real. A little further on he explains:

a category is real if anyone bothers to distinguish it, provided only that it offers a more or less reliable criterion for inclusion within it. On the other hand, there is a strong inclination to attribute a much more robust existence to, say the category of acids than to the one defined by my peculiar tastes [...] The greater reality of the former category has something to do with its having more robust and interesting properties (Dupré 2012:45).

Another philosopher, described in more detail in the theory chapter is Ian Hacking. He states something similar when saying: “If something has in fact been constructed, then it does exist, and so it is real” (Hacking 1999:125, See also Johannisson 2006). Concluding from such a line of thinking, therefore, in the current thesis giftedness as a category should be thought about not in terms of *whether* it exists or not, but *what* the category is, and what consequences the categorisations generate.

## The Gifted Learner and Gifted Education

Once a model for the analysis of giftedness is in place the final task of this chapter is to understand what is meant by gifted education. The cluster concept asserts that gifted students may not be a homogenous category. Still, in research there are some common teaching strategies suggested for education to be challenging and stimulating for gifted students. In one sense these are all founded on Lev Vygotsky (1978) and his socio-cultural perspective on learning. This view is critical of theories that describe learning as taking place in age dependent stages. More specifically, he criticises Jean Piaget and Alfred Binet and their assumptions about child development which state that:

development is always a prerequisite for learning and that if a child’s mental functions (intellectual operations) have not matured to the extent that he is capable of learning a particular subject, then no instruction will prove useful [...] All efforts was concentrated on finding the lower threshold of learning ability, the age at which a particular kind of learning first become visible” [and] the premise that learning trails behind development (Vygotsky 1978:80).

Instead, Vygotsky claims that learning starts long before children start school. Hence, the aim of education should be to keep a student constantly challenged within his or her zone of proximal development, what Vygotsky defines as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky 1978:86). It means students are taught in a situation where they both challenge and are challenged by others. The following section gives a more detailed description and evaluation of how these types of challenges can be applied specifically to teaching gifted students. Two pieces of research have been selected out of the multitude of sources available, as they summarise many of the recurring theories in the field.

Even if research in gifted education is a young discipline in Sweden, internationally it has existed for a long time. In 2007, Karen Rogers published a meta-study called “Lessons Learned about Educating the Gifted and Talented” where she synthesises research on educational adjustments for gifted students from 1861 and onwards. In her study she presents five adjustments which have shown to be beneficial in teaching gifted students. To begin with, a fundamental principle behind all the adjustments identified is that there are opportunities for students to be *challenged on a daily basis*. Rogers states it has shown to create a sense of continuous progression and thereby prevent students from getting stressed or bored (c.f. Arens & Waterman 2015, Kitsantas et al. 2017). As a complement to teaching in larger groups, Rogers suggests using alternative groupings as well as tutoring on a one-to-one basis with someone skilful in the student’s area of talent.

Another common denominator in the studies are examples of adjustments in the tempo of the learning cycle since gifted students have been shown to need less repetition and instead should be moved on to the next level of difficulty. For example, the students could be offered a possibility to *accelerate* (Dare & Nowicki 2018, Jung et al 2015) to a higher level, or to go faster or what Rogers calls *curriculum compacting*. This means the teacher reduces content and repetition of skills the students have already mastered, for example, by pre-assessing the students’ levels of knowledge before starting to teach a course or a module. Rogers then claims approximately 30 to 50 percent of course content may be omitted since the students have mastered it already.

Rogers suggests learning independence plays an important role in maintaining a satisfactory tempo preventing faster students from being held back by the progress of slower students, since the gifted students are then at risk of being distracted and focus on other tasks they find more relevant. Rogers asserts that research has shown the benefits of the teacher allowing the students to have continuous opportunities of *working independently*. One recurring term used in this context is *enrichment* which means the students are given opportunities to do in-depth studies, either within or in addition to the regular curriculum (Gagné 2007, Hodges et al. 2017, Brigandi et al. 2016, Gilson &

Little 2016). Rogers claims such strategy has turned out beneficial since gifted students are more likely to be in favour of running their own projects, follow their own focus areas, and use materials targeted at self-instruction. Rogers emphasises it is not the same as leaving the students to their own devices; they still need feedback to improve their learning and their work should be integrated into the course work, and not done as something extra.

According to Rogers' study, gifted education should also include the possibility for students to learn together with other students at the same level, meaning *grouping the students according to ability*. For this type of adjustment, the research argues for different possibilities such as full-time ability grouping, performance grouping, or cluster grouping, within or outside of class (c.f. Steenberger-Hu et al. 2016 and their review of a century of research on ability grouping and acceleration).

The last adjustment mentioned by Rogers, which more or less summarises the other strategies, is to use *differentiation*. Instead of physically separating students of different ability from each other, the goal is to keep the students together in classes of mixed ability but to differentiate in speed, in independence, in the amount of repetition and exercise requested, as well as how new material is presented to students. Someone who has focused further on this particular aspect of gifted education is Carol Tomlinson (c.f. 1996, 2014) who extends the meaning of differentiation in what she has described as 'Nine Dimensions'. A model to keep in mind when exploring these is Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of knowledge from 1956 which divides knowledge into factual, conceptual, procedural, and meta-cognitive categories (*A Taxonomy for Learning* 2001). Tomlinson does not treat these as individual components to be dealt with one at the time in a linear progression. Instead, she uses the equalizer on a sound system as a metaphor, placing the dimensions on a continuum scale and where different students are presented with different settings. What all her dimensions have in common is that the teacher adjusts materials or tasks *from the level of concrete, visible and direct representations to the abstract, interpretive, and fuzzy*. This means that the less organised the material is, the more work is then required by the student to define, structure, analyse it and to use their problem-solving skills rather than to reflect on something already given or digested. As a result, it gives the student an increased level of independence in their learning since they need to take into consideration more complex descriptions. As an example, this could be done by presenting the students to original sources rather than textbooks or descriptions of an event given from opposing views. Moreover, the students can be asked to draw their conclusions from what is *short-term consequences* in comparison to *long-term ones* and extend the analysis to include a more extensive chain of events (Tomlinson 1996).

These teaching strategies can be connected to the cluster concept. Just as in Bloom's taxonomy, the students move away from the level of factual infor-

mation to analysis and critical evaluation, abstraction and creativity. An important aspect is that knowledge requirements are changed, not just by making a quantitative difference, meaning the students are given ‘more of the same’ (Mellroth 2018, Szabo 2017). Instead, these teaching requirements suggest that challenging students is a matter of a qualitative difference, meaning an increase in complexity, for example through second order questions allowing the usage of high-ability skills and unconventional solutions (R. Sims, 2021).

## Summary and Application in Thesis

In summary, it is possible to see how the lessons and dimensions summarised by Rogers and Tomlinson connect and overlap. They all argue for the teacher to allow a greater level of independence, to actively monitor the students’ progress but at the same time avoid restraining them in their learning. Both Rogers and Tomlinson imply a need for the teacher to make adjustments perhaps other than those commonly referred to in the culture of the school. Rogers motivates this by stating that left to the responsibility of the regular classroom teacher, the task of challenging the gifted students almost certainly will be lost among “the plethora of other responsibilities, the lack of training, and often, lack of motivation to provide the differentiation” (Rogers 2007:385). Consequently, even if there is a will to try solutions for teaching the gifted student outside the tradition or culture of the school, there will be strong opposing forces for conformity backed up by social sanctions. In such circumstances, policy documents may give legitimacy to alternative approaches, but they may also fail to do so, or may present conflicting messages as we will see in the following analysis.

The arguments presented in this chapter point to a difficulty in approaching the area of giftedness and gifted education from an analytical standpoint, namely, the inconsistent use of terminology. For example, different terminology is used to describe the same aspects of giftedness, and the same terminology is used to describe different aspects. In the current thesis, contributing to the complexity are also matters to do with translation and how to interpret older, perhaps more metaphorical, descriptions used in policy documents at the same time as avoiding anachronisms or sidestepping anachronistic fallacies. For reasons of clarity, in the current thesis the term giftedness has been chosen as a consistent way of naming the concept. In the analysis, giftedness will be taken to refer to situations in which aspects of the cluster concept are mentioned, either directly or indirectly. This can be interpreted through the presence of some of the listed descriptors, whether directly stated or implied, or whether the relevant policies focus on gifted students, so defined, or whether the policies mention teaching methods that would stimulate or challenge gifted students, whether or not giftedness is mentioned explicitly. In a similar manner, gifted education will be described as a challenging education

interpreted to mean the kinds of intervention or strategies referred to above, even if the specific terminology, such as acceleration or enrichment, is not explicitly mentioned.

## Chapter 4: Theoretical Foundations

As clarified in the introduction, the focus of this thesis is on giftedness in education policy and the discursive elements influencing the ways giftedness has come to be conceptualised. Nevertheless, discourse is a term for which several different definitions are in use (Bacchi 2000). The way these differ is for example in the object of study, the methods that are used for analysis and on what aspects of human interaction emphasis is placed. Despite this, there are aspects in common shared also by the current thesis. For example, there is a problem-oriented focus including a critical perspective which means established ways of thinking are challenged rather than taken for granted. There is a focus on actions in context, and on the relationship between power and knowledge (Wodak & Meyer 2016). Furthermore, in the current thesis, the term discourse is understood as a process of social interaction in which certain values become taken for granted. Consequently, these values influence our sense of what is the correct way to think and act in relation to a particular issue - such as giftedness - or as Ball defines it: “about what can be said and thought, but also who can speak when, where and with what authority” (Ball 1993:14).

In the following chapter, I will explore theoretically how to understand where and how a discourse materializes, in the form of education policy. In agreement with discourse analysis, this means to go below the surface level of text and talk, and to critically assess knowledge claims and assumptions “of familiar notions, of established unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based on” (Foucault 1994:456). To be able to do so I use a combined set of concepts. In the first section of the chapter, I refer to Michael Foucault, and in particular to his theories on *Raison d’État* and the *formation of the subject*. These concepts are exemplified further by Ian Hacking and Peter Conrad who refer to two types of common rationalities - how people are categorised through quantification and medicalization. Secondly, the chapter clarifies more specifically what actors are involved in formulating and enacting policy, and where these processes can be studied. This is based on a model on governance in education by policy theorists Bo Lindensjö and Ulf P. Lundgren in combination with Stephen J. Ball’s theory on policy enactment. Together these theories provide the framework for the analysis in the thesis.

## Policy as Discourse

Policies are discursive formations; they are sets of texts, events and practices that speak to a wider social process of schooling, such as the production of ‘the student’, the ‘purpose of schooling’ and the construction of ‘the teacher’ (Ball et al. 2012:123).

As we saw in the historical review of the parallel school system (Chapter 2), the purpose of schooling was either to educate, or to socialise (Burman 2014), which later expanded to include aims of integration, democracy, and inclusion. Even if these core concepts indicate how underlying values of the education system has changed, in common they represent views held by the state on what education was - or is - and what values and knowledge to consider as of importance. According to Foucault (2008), what gives a state such legitimacy has gradually come into being through its own evolution history founded on a type of rationality, what he calls its *Raison d’État*. By this Foucault means a way to reason and justify arguments held by the state “that would enable the way of governing” (Foucault 2008:4). Furthermore, the rationality defines a set of principles a state is organised according to, which gives guidance in how to act.

Foucault claims that part of this rationality is for the state to have a set of well-developed juridical instances whose task it is to preserve its identity. Just like other types of systems this is done both by defending the state against different types of intrusions, by preventing it from becoming assimilated into a more general global unity, and by preserving a status quo where the dominance of the state ideology remains unchallenged (Foucault 2008:3-5). For such purposes the state invents disciplining institutions and positions, such as wardens in prisons, doctors, psychologists, and psychiatrist in the area of medicine. Furthermore, Foucault (1981) adds education to these disciplining powers as he defines it as “a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledges and powers which they carry” (Foucault 1981:64). This means the state creates a sense of what is true in a number of areas, such as what values education should be based on, when how and what students should be taught, and what role the teacher should have in teaching them. At the same time, other knowledges are ignored, subjugated, silenced (erudited) or disqualified, as: “[e]ach discipline recognizes true and false propositions; but it pushes back a whole teratology of knowledge beyond its margins” (Foucault 1981:60, 1980:82).

Another core aspect of state rationality is found in what Foucault calls the rationality of bio-politics and through the invention of ‘population’ including the formation of people into different types of subjects, (Foucault 1995:11, 16, 2008:21). The expression of such an agenda can be found in a wide variety of examples based on statistical measurements, such as demographic data about illnesses, crime rates, and sexualities, but also of mental statuses, including

intelligence, or school performance. According to Foucault (1995), the most important power tool used in this type of categorisation process is the definition of normality, and through a diagnosis of behaviour, where disciplining experts, like the teacher or the psychologist, are called upon to assess and give their judgements. In connection to the way power defends its dominant position it means that anomalies, are either corrected and assimilated back into this sense of normality or marginalized and silenced by being rejected of any level of status. Foucault argues:

[The disciplinary power] refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed. It differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum towards which one must move. It measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value of the abilities, the level, the 'nature' of individuals. It introduces, through this 'value giving' measure, the constraints of a conformity that must be achieved. Lastly, it traces the limits that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the external frontier of the abnormal [...] the perceptual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it normalizes. (Foucault, 1995:182-183).

As can be seen in the quotation, judgements about normalization and marginalisation contribute to the formation of subjects. This is done by singling out an individual, or a group of individuals, from the population as a whole. Once the division is made, it means borderlines are drawn between people as they are placed in opposition to each other, something Foucault describes as a dividing practice. Three consequences arise from such a practice; firstly, it imposes homogeneity, meaning that people who belong in the same category are assumed to be similar to each other, but different from others. In turn, it generates a reductionist view ignoring variability and expecting conformity. Moreover, the categories are constructed according to a norm which becomes a set standard to measure people against stating their degree of normality.

The same rationality of categorising people by quantitative means has been described by the philosopher Ian Hacking. He assigns the phenomenon to a positivistic epistemological tradition, meaning the view that what is claimed to be knowledge is only what can be measured in quantitative terms. Hacking traces this phenomenon back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and asserts that with the use of statistics also came a search for probability, rates, correlations, and causations in what he calls "the avalanche of numbers" (Hacking 1991:187). In a selection of his writing, Hacking explores further the relationship between statistics and 'making up people' in which "a new scientific classification may bring into being a new kind of person, conceived and experienced as a way to be" (Hacking 2007:285). What he means is that even if the people within the

category seem to be a natural kind it is actually the categorisation that generates their existence. He states:

We think of these kinds of people as given, as definite classes defined by definite properties. As we get to know more about these properties, we will be able to control, to help, to change, or to emulate them better. [...] Sometimes our sciences create kinds of people that in a certain sense did not exist before. That is making up people (Hacking 2007:293).

Hacking identifies seven imperatives which represent what he describes as the engines driving such development. Three out of the first four are clearly related to quantifiable and statistical means. Schematically, he describes it as the construction process starts by a classification, which means people are positioned and named into a common category. Once this is established, people who belong in that category are systematised, generating Hacking's first imperative: *Count!* This is then followed by the second imperative, *Quantify!* which means to create a scale something can be measured according to. Following the two first engines is the creation of an ideal, found in the imperative *Create Norms!* which in turn makes it possible to calculate an average of whatever value is measured. Consequently, a sense of normalcy and deviance is constructed apparent, for example, in expressions such as 'normal range' or 'normal distribution'. In turn, these norms mean not only what is most common but includes also moral dimensions of what ought to be. To exemplify, Hacking refers to BMI (Body Mass Index) and to specific borderlines for under-weight, over-weight further on to anorexia and obesity. To show how arbitrary these values are Hacking uses the example of IQ and how the value of 100 came to be treated as average of human intelligence. According to Hacking, when tests to measure such phenomena were first invented women scored higher than men and as a result generated an average of 105. Therefore, the questions were adjusted so both women and men came to the same value.<sup>17</sup>

As the last of his first four engine imperatives, Hacking describes how categories can be used to compare with other categories and to *Correlate!* with other features of the population (Hacking 2007:305-306). The latter also allows making predictions which in turn can be used to prevent occurrence of unwanted features. Once the categories are constructed, for the classification to be maintained, just like in Foucault's reasoning, Hacking refers to experts and institutions, there to confirm the existence of the categories. Together, the experts generate knowledge about the classification, how to recognise and define it. At the same time, the system becomes circular, meaning the classifica-

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<sup>17</sup> In another of his examples, Hacking traces the construction of the normal distribution curve first invented without a focus on normality but on distribution (Hacking 1991:189).

tion contributes to a body of knowledge, while the body of knowledge contributes to the classification, something Hacking describes as ‘the looping effect’ (Hacking 2007).

## Medicalization in search of normality

In most of Foucault’s descriptions of these types of categorisations, or subjectifications, he analyses power in institutions by evoking historical examples, such as his analysis of ‘the criminal’ (1995), ‘the madman’ (2009b) or ‘the homosexual’ (1998). Other theorists have shown how contemporary structures continue to be part of a similar rationality, indicating that even if new categories are generated the disciplining structures behind them remain the same. One of these is the sociologist Peter Conrad (2007) and in what he describes as ‘medicalization’, meaning the tendency to categorise an increasing number of life events as in need of treatment. Conrad defines this phenomenon to mean that: “a problem is defined in medical terms, described using medical language, understood through the adoption of a medical framework, or “treated” with a medical intervention” (Conrad 2007:5). One example of such a rationality he refers to is the number of diagnoses in DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) which more than doubled in between the first edition from 1952 and the fourth edition from 1994 (Conrad 2007:118). According to Conrad, therefore, diagnoses have come to include more and other sections of the population, even ‘people at risk’, meaning that to be in a such category is cause enough for treatment. The key concept in the centre of medicalization is just the same as in Foucault’s thinking, the concept of normality and the relationship between normality, deviance, and abnormality. Conrad writes:

Numerous studies have emphasized how medicalization has transformed the normal into the pathological and how medical ideologies, interventions, and therapies have reset and controlled the borders of acceptable behaviour, bodies, and states of being. The medical gaze, discourse, and surveillance are fundamental elements of this process, even if these writers use a different vocabulary. It is clear that post-modern critique points to the limits of modernist categorization, but it is the very processes of medical categorization that create medicalization (Conrad 2007:13).

Hacking (1995) argues along the same lines as he is interested in how classifications in the social, medical, and biological sciences generate knowledge. For example, his interest in the categorisations of people has been directed towards diagnoses, such as autism, ADHD and to what he calls ‘multiples’, meaning people diagnosed as suffering from multiple personalities. In his description of the categorisation process Hacking adds another three engines to the ones already mentioned found in the imperatives: *Medicalise!* *Biologise!* and in its most recent expression - *Geneticise!* the foundation categories are

based on (Hacking 2007:309-310). Of particular relevance for the current thesis, at the very end of one of his texts Hacking relates also to genius as an example where this type of engine-driven rationality applies. He claims:

Starting with Galton's Hereditary Genius, we have gradually made intelligence statistical, with norms. Indeed, the usual IQ-tests are so statistical that the questions are designed so that a curve of scores forms a normal distribution with a mean of 100 [---] true genius – I do not hesitate to use the phrase – will be living somewhere else. Rejecting classification, it will blithely refuse to interact with questionnaires, institutions, experts, and knowledge (Hacking 2007:316-317).

## Summary and application in thesis

Applying these theories in the current thesis entails an ambition to find if there are any indications of subjugated or erudite knowledges in giftedness and education, and in that case to reconstruct them, and identify where some routes were taken rather than others. In Foucault's more concrete examples, disciplining structures of education are found through the way teachers are set to teach defined knowledge, values, and behaviours, and thereby to categorize students according to agreed scales of quantifiable measurements. Secondly, as indicated by Conrad, medicalisation not only has resulted in an increasing number of phenomena defined as deviant, but an expansion also in what societal institutions are involved in maintaining such rationality. Education has already been defined as part of society's mode of control and discipline. This means it is possible to assume that the one who governs education dominates the conceptualisation of giftedness in relation to what is normal, or in need of treatment, but also how, when and if learning should take place. Of interest in the current thesis is therefore what indications there are of these rationalities in education policy and how the rationalities are used to categorise the gifted subject by positioning giftedness in relation to a sense of normality in the education system.

## Policy in Place

Having accounted for what aspects of discourse that will be in focus of the analysis, and how these may be constructed we need to clarify also where these discursive battles may be situated. Support for such can be found in a model by Bo Lindensjö and Ulf P. Lundgren which visualises a way to understand structures and institutions included in governing education and in the making of policy. More concretely the model can be thought of in the form of a 'cell structure', illustrated below:

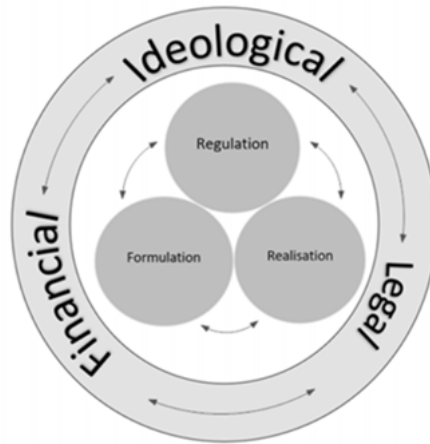


Figure 4:1 Lindensjö & Lundgren, The Cell Structure of Educational Governance

As visualised, the model is centred on three circles, or cell nuclei. The nucleus to the left symbolises the arena for *formulation*, which as the term indicates is where education policy is formulated, and where reform work is set in progress (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006:172). Traditionally, the actors present at this level have been politicians in government and in parliament, supported by experts specifically selected to offer their advice. However, according to Lindensjö and Lundgren, through decentralisation processes, influence over education has devolved to other bodies. For example, local formulation arenas have been generated, such as local Boards of Education, individual schools, or school networks, but also interest organisations arguing for a particular issue. These may or may not agree with what has been centrally formulated.

Naturally, the possibility to disagree highlights the relationship between the formulation arena and the nucleus on the right, that of *realization*. Linking it further to Ball’s (1993) terminology, this is where policies are enacted, which means the teachers decode policy by *interpreting* in what way they seem relevant and what needs priority before recoding or *translating* them into action. Ball describes this as a type of mediation where policies can be struggled over or ignored joining together “macro-level analysis of education systems and education policies, and micro-level investigation, especially that which takes account of people’s perception and experiences” (Ball 1993:10). In Ball et al’s way of explaining, these interpretations are dependent on *constraining* and *enabling* factors (Ball et al. 2012:50), such as resource allocation, collaboration available, and the *intertextual compatibility* with other policies in circulation at the time. The outcome of the teachers’ enactments is also a matter of its level of ideological concreteness, meaning the more sense it makes to the teachers the more likely they are to enact certain principles, while ignoring others (Ball 1993:12-13).

While the perhaps most obvious example of the teacher's enactment is in teaching, Ball includes other actions as well, such as conversations, meetings and events and the production of planning documents or different artefacts. It includes borrowing ideas and practices from others, but also building strategies concerning a particular matter including processes of "re-ordering, displacing, constructing and re-constructing" (Ball 2015:309). What becomes clear therefore is that the teachers as actors have agency, meaning the relationship between the arena for formulation and that for realization, should not be interpreted as a linear system emanating from top to bottom. Instead, it is "relational and situated" (Ball et al. 2012:9) representing a non-linear reflexive, or dialectic system where policy texts from the arena of formulation are implemented, as well as responded to, re-formulated or even ignored by the teachers. Still, the teachers cannot act and enact independently of what has been formulated, meaning, to return briefly to Foucault (1998) where he states: "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Foucault 1998:95). Therefore, it could be argued, it is legitimate to look at the two representations of policy as indicative of the whole: the policy documents in themselves, and the responses by teachers to questions about their actions.

The third arena finally, is the cell nucleus above the other two in the model, the arena for *regulation*. This is where control of the other two arenas is executed in relation to defined key principles (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006:172-176). It could be argued that the same divide between a central and a local level applies also to the regulation arena, since different elements of the school system play a regulative part. For example, at the central level of the Swedish education system the role is played by the School Inspectorate (see Chapter 5) while locally we can find regulative structures through Heads of School promoting teachers to take on certain responsibilities, offering salary supplements or its opposite meaning reducing such responsibilities and bonuses. This last point gives reasons to clarify, not only *where* policy processes occur and *by whom*, but also *how*. In addition to the three arenas, Lindensjö and Lundgren claim that there are three main tools used in governing education, in the illustration placed in the cell membrane surrounding the arenas. Taking the teacher as an example, together these tools influence the teachers' possibility to act, either by enabling or constraining them, to use Ball's terminology. The first of these is *legal* governance, communicated via laws and regulations in policy, for example in the form of education acts, statutes, curricula, and syllabi. The second tool is *financial* control, for example via distribution of resources. This could be in the form of funding of a particular in-service project, or a Head of School deciding to support certain teachers, for example by allowing investments in their ideas about certain teaching practises, or projects for school development. Lastly, in connection to claims by Foucault, Hacking and Con-

rad education is also governed through *ideological* values, via certain key concepts in policy for example expressed in learning objectives, curriculum content and categorisations of students and teachers (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006:25-27).

An important remark to make here in connecting ideology to discourse, is to think of it as “a basic framework for action” (van Dijk 2007:35) there to control and organise social cognition in the form of attitudes and give guidance what to think in a particular issue. This means that ideology is not by necessity the same as political ideology, even if such is never far away when discussing education. Instead, it functions both at a macro and a micro level. In unpacking its meaning further, the discourse theorist Teun van Dijk approaches the concept from the view of its social aspects and describes it as both a basic framework of shared “identities, aims, values, positions and resources” and “an interface” between the interests of a group and its individual members (van Dijk 2007:27-29). Therefore, van Dijk concludes “if discourse is action, we need to spell out in detail under what conditions this is so, and what types, levels of scope of action are involved” which includes an analysis of how the ideologies are “enacted, expressed, or reproduced in text and talk” (van Dijk 2007:34-35).

## Summary and application in thesis

In relation to what was mentioned in the first section of the theory chapter, Lindensjö and Lundgrens’ cell model contributes to the analysis of the conceptualisations by clarifying what roles the main actors play in representing the state’s educational institutions, where interaction takes place, and what tools they have at hand. As we will find, the focus of the analysis is not on governance per se. Instead, the model is intended to guide sample selection and to identify actors and arenas of significance. It also clarifies how the governing of education consists of a conglomerate of voices. In the sense that not all voices are equally heard and that some voices are not even given the right to speak, “[t]hus, certain possibilities for thought are constructed” (Ball 1993:14). Additionally, we will find that in practice, the structure, role descriptions and the borderlines between the actors are not fully as stable and static as suggested. The same goes for the tools. Even if they are visualized as separate categories they should be seen as interdependent, indicated by the arrows in the model. For example, ideological objectives influence financial priorities, and legal demands are based on ideological values. (For further reflections on theory, see the end of Chapter 5).

To summarise, if Lindensjö, Lundgren and Ball clarify the spatial context where, and by whom, giftedness is conceptualised in policy, Foucault, Hacking and Conrad provide the discursive perspective of giftedness as a feature in education, its rationality, and how it may influence the teachers’ thinking and acting. Due to its complexity, the analysis in the thesis is built up in stages. In

response to the first research question, Part 2 of the thesis investigates the conceptualisation of giftedness in policy as text. Out of the multitude of features in policy, the focus of the description is limited to the role of the teacher in relation to giftedness, suggested teaching strategies to support such students, and categorisation of the gifted student found in definition and identification.

Moreover, in response to the second research question on conceptualisation and enactment, in Part 3 of the thesis I explore the same three topics in a contemporary setting. This means what roles teachers of today play in enacting giftedness, what teaching strategies they apply, how they categorise students, but also what constraints and enabling factors they find in doing so. This means that all actions the teachers take in their roles as teachers are interpreted as examples of enactments. Finally, in the discussion in Part 4 of the thesis I synthesise the findings in Part 2 and Part 3 by analysing in greater detail the discursive elements of the data. The latter responds to the third and fourth research questions investigating rationalities and tensions identified in the conceptualisations.

## Chapter 5: Methodological Considerations

According to Teun van Dijk, a common mistake about discourse analysis, or critical discourse analysis (CDA), is to think of it as a method. Instead, he claims it is “a state of mind, an attitude, a way of dissenting” therefore “there is not ‘a’ or ‘one’ method of CDA, but many” (Wodak & Meyer 2016:3). What he means is that discourse analysis is multi-disciplinary in that it uses methods from a variety of other fields, depending on what is the aim of the study, and what questions it aims to answer. In the following chapter, explanations will be given of the methods used in the thesis to select, collect, and to analyse data. In agreement with the above stated, the current work should be recognised as eclectic; there is an interest in power relations in social interaction combining textual content analysis, a survey and qualitative interviews set in historical and contemporary contexts. The chapter clarifies also ethical considerations of relevance. At the end of the chapter, a critique is offered of relevance for my methodological and theoretical choices, discussing some of its limitations.

### Sample Selection

In connection to the first two research questions on conceptualisations in text and as enacted, the empirical data is divided into two main parts of the thesis. Part 2 consists of a text analysis of policy documents relevant for education in general, and for gifted education in particular, while Part 3 presents interview data of contemporary enactment of giftedness by teachers. These two sets complement each other. Policy texts might tell very little about what is happening on the ground, indeed, what the teachers do may have little connection to the actual texts. In this respect, the two sets of data represent two different types of analysis. While the text documents are exhaustive, meaning I have studied the whole curricula published within the time period in question, the interview sample is too small to say how typical it is. Still, the teacher interviews present examples of enactments, that is, showing what kinds of enactments are possible.

## Texts at official policy level

For the analysis in Part 2, texts from four actors are identified as significant based on Lindensjö and Lundgren's cell model (2006). Bearing in mind that ideas between the actors do not by necessity travel in the direction from top to bottom the following account is still structured in such a way to create a manageable view.

### **The Government**

The first actor identified is actually a group of actors found at the level of Government. The earliest documents refer to the Swedish King, later transferred to the Parliament, the Department of Ecclesiastics, Skolöverstyrelsen and to the Ministry of Education (*Utbildningsdepartementet*). My own reading of these documents included the complete set of statutes and syllabi for all subjects starting by the first ever Ordinance from 1561, while the documents judged as relevant for the analysis cover texts from 1820 until the reform in 2011 with its latest revision in 2022.

To a large extent, these documents are preceded by extensive work done by specifically appointed committees. Even though these committees are advisory rather than legislative, their reports are also seen to represent policy at this level. Out of the multitude of reports available, a selection was made focusing mainly on the works by the two committees in the 1940's, published in the Green Papers SOU 1943:19 and SOU 1948:27. Their relevance is motivated by the impact they had for the integrated school system in relation to the 'differentiation question' (Dahllöf 1967, Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006, Lundahl 2006, Marklund 1985). In addition to the Green Papers included in the analysis, SOU 1958:11 and SOU 1960:13, Torsten Husén and Kjell Härnqvists' (2000) summary of the talent reserve, and Tomas Englund's thesis *Curriculum as a Political Problem* (1986) were read as background.

### **SNAE**

The second actor chosen is SNAE - the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*). The authority was formed in 1991 and is responsible for clarifying the Education Act and the curricula by formulating syllabi and grading criteria. It also formulates advice to schools on how to interpret and apply the rules and regulations in these documents. Included in its responsibilities are also regulative matters through the monitoring of quality of education by keeping statistical data and providing analyses accordingly. In its reports SNAE addresses specific issues, used to formulate, and offer in-service projects for school staff and management to make improvements. (SFS 2015:1047). Moreover, SNAE has the role of legal regulator in its responsibility for authorising schools in offering Peak Programmes (SFS 2008:793).

Apart from the syllabi concerning elementary and upper secondary school two documents have been published by SNAE explicitly in relation to giftedness. The first is the report *High-Performing Students, High Performances and Teaching* from 2012 (my translation). The second is *Gifted Students* from 2015 (my translation) a support material to be used in schools as part of in-service training about giftedness and gifted education. Both texts are also included in the sample.

### **The School Inspectorate**

Aside from the authorities just mentioned, the Swedish education system has a long tradition of regulation through inspection. From 2008 the responsibility is in the hands of the School Inspectorate (*Skolinspektionen*), which is the third actor chosen for this study. Each year, either through a rota of regular inspections at pre-selected schools, or unannounced inspections following a complaint, the Inspectorate is in charge of controlling the extent to which municipalities fulfil regulations in policy in particular regarding equity and democracy. They collect their data from observations and interviews with teachers, management, and students. Furthermore, the Inspectorate refers to findings in the School Survey which twice a year is sent out to schools generating about 300,000 responses (the School Inspectorate 2016:5, the School Inspectorate 2022). In agreement with Lindensjö and Lundgrens' cell model (2006), this would mean that the School Inspectorate is the authority in charge of regulating, rather than formulating or realising. However, the Inspectorate has a number of legal actions they can take against a municipality or a specific school, such as issuing an injunction, a fine, or in severe circumstance even closing a school (SFS 2010:800, 26 Ch. 10-27§). Therefore, claims have been made that the Inspectorate does more than to regulate, and actually takes on the role of formulator as well (Novak 2018). We will return to this matter in the discussion in Chapter 13.

The School Inspectorate has published three reports included in the sample where they actively argue for more support to students in need of more challenges. These are *Different students Same Teaching* (2010, my translation) *Challenges in Teaching – Many Students in Need of More Stimulation and Challenges* (2016, my translation) followed by *Challenging Education for High Performing Students Quality Assessment of Upper Secondary Level Natural Science Programme* (2018, my translation).

Table 5:1 Text Sample - Swedish Policy Documents 1820/2022

The Early Period		The Middle Period			The Late Period			Contemporary Policy			
<i>Church Ordinance 1561, Educational Ordinance 1611, 1649, 1693, 1724, 1807</i>											
Folk School Policy	Grammar School Policy	Green Papers	Folk School Policy	Grammar School Policy	Green Papers	Elementary School Policy	Upper Secondary School Policy	Green Papers	SNAE	the School Inspectorate (2011)	SPSM
FSS 1842	GSS 1820	RC 1820			SOU 1943:19	Lgr 69	Lgr 70		SNAE (2012)		
	GSS 1856				SOU 1948:27	Lgr 80			SNAE (2015)		
	GSS 1859			FSC 1955			The Education Act 1985			the School Inspectorate (2016)	
FSS 1882	GSS 1878		GSC 1958		SOU 1958:11			SOU 1992:86		the School Inspectorate (2018)	SPSM (2018)
FSSI897			Act 1962		SOU 1960:13	Lpo 94	Lpf 94	SOU 1992:94			SPSM (2021)
			Elementary School Policy	Upper Secondary School Policy		The Education Act 2011					
FSC 1919	GSS 1905		Lgr 62			Lgr 11	Lgy 11				
FSS 1921	GSS 1906		FSS 62			SKOLFS 2011:46	SKOLFS 2011:47				
	GSS 1928		Lgy 68			Lgr 22	Lgy 22				

## SPSM

In 2008, following on from a long tradition in focusing on special education, the National Agency for Special Pedagogy (*SPSM*) was formed as a separate authority in charge of support to “children, young and adults with disabilities”. Just like SNAE, the SPSM offers in-service training courses and formulates documents to support teachers in their work. It develops, informs about, and provides adjusted learning material for the students mentioned, and it regulates financially by awarding project grants (SFS 2011:130). Indications of giftedness being seen as a matter for special education makes it relevant to include SPSM as a fourth actor in the study. However, as we will find in the analysis, the authority has not published any documents concerning giftedness. Instead, information was collected from SPSM’s official website where they address the concept.

In Table 5.1 on the page above, the texts in italics were the background readings while the non-italicised titles were the ones used in the analysis. During the 200 years covered by the analysis, the way to name the policy documents has undergone some changes. For example, before the integration of the parallel systems, the main documents are the Statutes (*stadgor*), in this thesis denoted by GSS for the Grammar School Statute, and FSS for the Folk School equivalent. In 1962, these were replaced by the Education Act (*skol-lagen*) the Elementary Education Ordinance (*Skolförordningen*) and the Upper Secondary Education Ordinance (*Gymnasieförordningen*). To reduce complexity in referring to the different names of the documents, they are all described as statutes, FSS for the Folk School documents and GSS for the Grammar School equivalent. The earliest statutes include curricula and syllabi but after 1870, curricula are partially found in separate documents. The title of these changes from ‘normalplan’ to ‘undervisningsplan’ and the currently used ‘läroplan’. In the analysis of texts before 1960, the acronym FSC was used for the Folk School Curriculum, and GSC for the Grammar School Curriculum. After 1960, the curriculum for integrated elementary school is found in the acronym Lgr, and for the upper secondary school curriculum in Lgy.

## Local (en)actors

The final category of actors in the study are teachers, given specific attention due to their significance in identifying and providing for the students and their existence precisely in the intersection between policy as text and policy as enacted in practice. As will be seen in the analysis in Part 3, the teachers’ enactments can be found in teaching and assessing, but also for example by them formulating local policy documents, through their roles as advisors within the school, or at the level of council, or by running in-service training

projects for their colleagues, for example in their roles as First Teachers (*förstelärare*).<sup>18</sup>

Why teachers were judged as relevant to include in this current analysis was motivated also by their specific role in the education systems. In aiming to erase differences between schools in urban and rural areas, one of the recurring ideological aims expressed in Swedish policy documents is that education shall be equivalent (*likvärdig*) independently of where in the country the schools are situated. In theory, this would indicate a strong correlation between education as in the way the documents are formulated and the way they are enacted. Through decentralisation and the transference of power from the state to municipalities, from municipalities to individual schools and individual teachers, teachers in the Swedish national system have a level of pedagogical and methodological autonomy which makes the relationship between text and enactments more complex (Frostensson 2015, Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006, Daun 2007). In addition, even if the national teachers are responsible for attending to regulations in the Education Act, curricula, and the syllabi it is also the case that these texts are open for interpretation. In comparison to other more detailed policy systems, such as the IB, the Swedish national policy documents are written out of general rather than specific content which means the teacher can make choices what to emphasize in their teaching. After the final examinations were taken out of the system in 1960's the teachers are in charge of assessing the students as well as constructing the exercises to assess them, without any external moderation. All in all, it is a fair assumption to make that the way policy is enacted could differ greatly from one classroom and school to the next (Ball et al. 2012).

## Complexities in sample selection

A challenge in studying giftedness in the context of education in Sweden was how to find teachers actively engaged in teaching with such a focus since there is neither a systematic way giftedness is addressed in schools, nor any official indication of such a responsibility. In 2014 seven of Sweden's 290 local municipalities jointly formulated a plan of action to increase standards of teaching for gifted students, in particular in mathematics (SKL 2016). Initially, the seven people listed as project coordinators were thought of as possible participants and their municipalities to be treated as cases. As it turned out, even

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<sup>18</sup> The First Teacher Reform from 2013, was introduced to make the teaching profession more attractive, and to "acknowledge the best teachers" with an interest in school development. An additional aspect was to increase competence among the teaching staff by attracting people with a PhD to apply for teaching positions in schools, why a position as lector was invented (SFS 2013:70).

though only a little more than a year had passed between the most recent revision of the plan and my contacting the people involved, only a few of them were still actively engaged in the project, while others had left without replacement. As an alternative strategy a snowball sample was initiated. Thus, the participants from the SKL project were asked to direct me to other people of relevance, generating a first sample of 28 teachers. In the autumn 2018, the people selected were sent an email with a short summary of my project and a link to an on-line survey focused on their experiences in ‘teaching with a gifted perspective’. However, when the responses were collected it turned out only ten people had completed the survey and despite the instruction stating teachers as the target respondent only six of them actually taught. A decision was then made to use the data in the form of a pilot study and to construct a first impressions of areas of significance, to be monitored further in the study to follow (Bryman 2016:260).

The third phase of the collection of data included unstructured multiple interviews. In addition to two teachers from the pilot study, participants were identified via purposive sampling (Bryman 2016). Four criteria were used for selection, a) to include only teachers from the Swedish elementary and upper secondary education teaching with a gifted perspective, teachers in the Peak Programmes and teachers teaching in the IBDP in Sweden, b) to prioritize participants teaching in other subjects than mathematics, c) to include different levels in the education system, and d) to gain a geographic spread of schools. Again, emails were sent to introduce myself and my research project and a request about participation in my study. The final sample, consist of 13 teachers, teaching in 11 different schools which means two of the schools were represented by two teachers. These teachers teach in different programmes, or different subjects, and have been involved in teaching in their respective profile for a different length of time. Thereby they were seen to exemplify different views but within the same context. In Chapter 10, where the participants are first introduced, more details are given of the teachers’ background characteristics.

## Collection of Data - Policy as Enactment

### On-line survey design

The on-line survey (Appendix 5) was divided into five sections covering:

- Background school data
- The teachers’ background and qualifications
- Resource allocation
- Application of teaching adjustments
- Definition and identification procedures

To address teachers from a variety of teaching backgrounds, in the instruction to the survey, I encouraged the participants to answer the questions in relation to ‘teaching with a gifted perspective’. This phrase was meant to direct the respondent specifically towards this perspective on teaching, rather than teaching in general. In addition, it was meant to include teachers independently of whether they based their teaching strategies on a defined group of gifted students, selected by some use of identification method, or if they focused on providing challenging education, but without defining specific students. In the instruction to the survey, I explained the use of the phrase. In the survey, the respondents were given the possibility to describe any identification procedures in more detail, clarifying their views on the relationship between identification and teaching adjustments further.

## Multiple interviews

The series of interviews used in the study meant the same respondent was interviewed three times during a nine-month period, running between August 2020 and May 2021. In addition, the two respondents who participated also in the pilot survey were interviewed a first time in May 2019. On average, both the first and the second interviews lasted 60 minutes, while the third interview lasted on average 30 minutes. In total 31 hours of interview data was collected.

In comparison to single instant interviews, multiple interviews have some advantages. For example, it is possible to cover more content and gradually go deeper into the responses of each individual. In turn, this affects the validity of the interview as it is possible to find inconsistencies between views expressed at different points in time, to return to former statements and to ask for clarifications. Moreover, it is possible to detect changes in the views of the respondent for example as they gain more experience of their applied teaching strategies (Bryman 2016:469).

Using multiple interviews in this way also allow the researcher and the respondent to build more of a relationship which in turn opens up for more trust between them. In this respect, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) refute the idea of research as aiming to find and describe a reality consisting of objective facts which are independent of the person doing the study. They state that instead of “a botanist collecting herbs [---] an interview is a conversation where knowledge is created through the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee where both contribute to the construction to the same degree” (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:189, my translation). The researcher and psychologist Margareta Hydén (2000) emphasizes the importance of such a relationship when she argues for interviews to be based on dialogical principles. She says: “The object of an interview is to make possible for the interviewee to formulate themselves in an as extensive and multifaceted narrative as possible. [...] The researcher’s ability to create such a relationship to the interviewee is essential to whether it will succeed or not” (Hydén 2000:141, my translation).

One of the tools she suggests using is what she calls a ‘voice of support’ (*hjälp*), which means the interviewer lends its voice to the interviewee to support him or her in articulating their thoughts. Hydén explains the function of such as something “to relate to and to deviate from” and as:

a matter of helping the interviewee to be in contact with and express emotions and thoughts which are not entirely clear to the person. Acting as a ‘voice of support’ the interviewer “lends his or her voice” by asking for clarifications, or by presenting tentative interpretations of what has been stated but points out that unclarities and interpretations can be expressions of one of many possibilities to think and to speak (Hydén 2000:143, my translation).

In agreement with claims by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), Hydén, argues this type of bond between the researcher and the respondent previously has been used as an argument against validity, since it has been seen to reduce objectivity. In comparison to in the mid-1980 when she started her research Hydén points to a change in what is considered to be legitimate in this matter. She says an interview can be understood much more as a collective process leaving behind the idea of the researcher as an objective observer presenting objective facts. Instead, the researcher shall be seen as part of what is studied (Hydén 2000:140).

In the interviews in the current study, this collaborative principle was used which means in some cases I allowed the interviews to include short instances of dialogue rather than simply questions from me and answers by the respondent. However, my own contributions were kept short to make sure the interviews were clearly dominated by the voice of the respondents and to avoid creating a relationship where I could be mistaken for an authority. The occurrence of the respondents disagreeing with some of my interpretations and suggestions indicate this was not the case. In addition, during the course of the interviews, I repeatedly provided summaries of what was said, including an interpretation of the responses. This meant the respondents were frequently given the opportunity to respond to my interpretations *in situ*, for example by making additional clarifications and corrections.

### Interview guide – aide-mémoire

The interview method approached in the study could be characterised as qualitative. It means the aim was to get as rich answers as possible, out of the respondent’s point of view and to be guided by what this person finds relevant (Bryman 2016:466). Before the first interview, to find relevant background data about the school setting the official web pages of the schools were consulted. The first set of interviews was unstructured but based on guiding questions (Appendix 4). As *aide-mémoire* the same topics were referred to as in

the survey (Bryman 2016:201). While questions on school context, background data, resource allocation and teaching strategies were similar in the interviews with all three samples of teachers, any references to ‘teaching with a gifted perspective’ were changed to ‘teaching in the IB’ and ‘teaching in the Peak Programme’ respectively. Moreover, instead of assuming an awareness of giftedness the IB teachers and the Peak teachers were asked about their familiarity with the concept, if the concept was used within their school settings, and how they would define it.

The second set of interviews was thematically structured and focused on enactment in the form of teaching, exploring in greater detail the challenging elements brought up by the teachers in the first set of interviews. In particular, it included questions on what organisational strategies the teachers use, what lesson content and methods they apply and what exercises the students were given as part of their learning. In between the second and the third set of interviews, all transcripts were analysed in detail looking for any inconsistencies in the topics covered. The third interview was used to correct such discrepancies and to certify that all teachers got to respond to the same topics.

## Treatment and Analysis of Data

Table 5:2 Discourse Descriptors

<b>Level</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>Topic selection</b>	What is the text about?
<b>Schematic Organisation</b>	What is the logical structure of the argument? What is emphasised and given importance? What is left out?
<b>Local meanings</b>	In relation to the context of the argument, what implications, presuppositions or assumptions are made? What claims about causations or coherence are presented? Are there any contradictions created?
<b>Lexicalization</b>	What values are deducible by the choice of words? i.e. positive or negative descriptions

(Adapted from van Dijk 1997:33).

Once the texts sample for Part 2 had been constructed, the documents were read multiple times in chronological order studying content relating to the

three selected themes. The analysis was set to focus on the logic of the arguments put forward in the texts, paying attention to the discourse descriptors listed in Table 5:2 above.

In the analysis, arguments are understood in context in two ways: as a sequence of logical deductions or a sequence of causal claims. Both these manifestations may have similar structure, for example, 'If x is true, then y is true', or 'A causes B so if we want B to happen therefore, we have to do A'. A challenge in executing such an analysis is that important parts of the argument may be left without being stated, in logic what is called 'enthymemes' (Copi & Cohen 1998:22). Copi and Cohen claim when such information is missing "one assumes that the maker of the argument did have more in mind than was stated explicitly" something they relate to as common in both scientific and everyday discourse (Copi & Cohen 1998:312). Moreover, to analyse an argument it is essential to refer it to other propositions, and to construct its antecedence. This means there is a reliance on what is described as 'cross-reference in context' and on 'retrograde analysis' including "to reason backwards from what is to what was" by looking at "the chain of events that led to the facts now confronted" (Copi & Cohen 1998:77). In my own reading, I applied such a method of contextualisation by relating each text to when it was written in the reform history, described in Chapter 2, and by comparing the individual text to the equivalent findings in the preceding documents (Fairclough & Wodak 1997; Westberg 2021).

Part 3 of the thesis includes an analysis of what actions the teachers commit in their interpretation and translation of policy relating to giftedness and what *constraining* and *enabling* factor they find in doing so. In the case of the interviews, except for one of the pilot interviews done before the outbreak of the Corona pandemic, the data was collected via telephone, including voice calls only. The interviews were recorded and transcribed into word files using standard orthographic notation and standard language concerning spelling and grammar, but true to the occurrence of non-standard vocabulary. In all quoted extracts in the analysis, repetitions of single words or phrases were deleted to improve readability. The interviews with the IBDP teachers were executed in English while the interviews with the teachers in national education including the Peak Programmes were done in Swedish. In the thesis, the quotations by the teachers in national education including the Peak teachers were translated into English by myself, with the aim of capturing the equivalent content of the speaker's utterances as far as possible. Since the thesis is written in the tradition of Foucauldian discourse analysis it means the interviews were analysed without attention to any non-linguistic features of speech, as would have been the case if ascribing to the tradition of Conversational Analysis (Willing, 2014:343).

To summarise, the thesis is constructed using a combination of methods to study the topics of significance. In response to the first research question on conceptualisations in text, a selection of policy documents has been analysed

through a focus on the argumentation concerning teaching strategies, identification and definition of giftedness and the role of the teacher in teaching and identifying students. In response to the second research question, the same conceptualisations found in teachers' enactments have been analysed through multiple interviews preceded by a pilot survey. Both sets of data have then been synthesised emphasising the discursive elements of giftedness in the context of education in Sweden.

## Ethical Considerations

From the beginning of my project, my intention was to do single instant interviews with teachers in addition to classroom observations and interviews with students. However, the outbreak of the pandemic made any methods involving spending time in schools unsuitable and its continuity uncertain. Still, the empirical part of the project has been approved by the Ethical Committee at Uppsala University through standard application procedures (Dnr. 2019-01738). In the application, the components considered to be of relevance were:

- Information and consent procedures
- Treatment, publication, and storage of data
- Possible risks of the participants

### Information and consent procedures

The surveys and the interviews were all preceded by the participants receiving a letter of consent. Some adjustments were made in formulating the focus of investigation according to what type of education the teachers exemplify (Appendix 1-3) while the ethical dimensions remained the same. The consent forms clarified the aim of the research project, data collection and publication procedures, as well as routines for storing data. That participation in the project was voluntary was also clarified, along with stating the right for participants to withdraw at any point without needing to give any further reasons as to why. The consent forms also mentioned the possibility to plead against any treatment of personal data according to the EU Regulation of Data Protection, or to the Swedish Data Protection Authority (DPA). Since the interviews were done via telephone, the consent forms were emailed to the participants a few days before the interviews took place. The actual interviews were introduced by an oral request for consent, which was recorded in audio.

## Treatment, publication, and storage of data

The sound files retrieved from interviews were all transcribed into text. In the process of transcribing, to prevent identification when published all names of the participants and their schools were altered, as well as any indications of the geographical locations of the schools. For the same reason, all features of language including ethnicity and regional accents were changed into standardized language in the quotations. All sound files were transferred in their complete form to password protected external hard disks. These were stored in a locked cupboard. After being transferred to the hard disks, all data was deleted from on the USB-stick used for the recordings.

## Possible risks of the participants

Another ethical factor to take into consideration concerning the data was what details about the students to publish. I consider both age and gender of relevance since these are factors where expectations on their performance may be challenged, and where both marginalising and dividing practises might occur. In the same way, previous studies have drawn attention to unequal treatment of students based on their ethnicity, rather than ability (Jen et al 2017, Olaszewski-Kubilus et al. 2017, Young & Young 2018, Zbanova et al 2015). However, the aim of the thesis does not include ethnicity as a specific point of study why no specific emphasis on such characteristics has been reported in the data. Some students may also be what is categorised as ‘twice exceptional’. This means that the students, at the same time as being gifted have learning difficulties, such as dyslexia (Neihart 2008, Reis et al. 2014). This aspect was also not in focus of the current study why data concerning any such aspects were omitted.

A final issue regarding the categorisation of the students was how to relate to procedures of identification of giftedness. For me as a researcher it was important not to interfere with what individual students had been identified as gifted, or not, and what methods had been used in doing so. Instead, the study relies on the definitions and identifications referred to by the teachers themselves.

## Critical Evaluation of Limitations

What follows in this last section of the chapter is a critique and an evaluation of some of the strengths and limitations of the thesis. These concern reliability and validity in method and in theory.

## Replicability and Transparency

A general concern about qualitative research is to do with *external reliability*, meaning that a study can be replicated and then generate the same findings. However, according to Le Compte and Goetz quoted in Bryman (2016) “a social situation is dynamic rather than static which makes it impossible to freeze” and thereby impossible to replicate in an identical manner (Bryman 2016:383). Therefore, other types of criteria are used for evaluation, such as to what extent the results are judged to be feasible. A way to establish such a relationship is via *respondent validation*. In the current study this was part of the interviews where I offered my interpretations of some aspects in the form of direct questions in situ. This meant the respondents could agree or disagree and clarify aspects of my interpretations directly (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). A second aspect is to do with *transparency* which Bryman (2016) relates to making ‘thick descriptions’ and to present a rich account of details. In the current study, the data from both texts and interviews have been reported by frequent references to specific quotations, rather than just descriptive summaries. This is also the reason behind justifications given for certain translations in the form of footnotes and the inclusion of original wording in brackets.

## Data Collection and Sample Construction

In the data collection process, all text documents were read as complete texts. Firstly, they were read *inductively* and *broadly* (Bryman 2016:563). This means that the focus of the reading was on all categorisations of students relating to ability, all teaching adjustments to differentiate or individualise teaching in all subjects, and all aspects of the role of the teachers. At a second stage, the findings in the broader reading were analysed related directly to aspects of giftedness in how the students were categorised and identified, what teaching strategies were mentioned to support them and what the role of the teacher was specifically in relation to these students. This means that an overview was obtained of the content of the documents before selecting what to focus the analysis on.

In addition, the 13 teachers were selected by *purposive sampling* which is used to find as rich data as possible, as quickly as possible (Maxwell 2013). In comparison to random sampling, it involves directly turning to a respondent that will be most relevant for the study. According to Maxwell, this “provides far more confidence that the conclusions adequately represent the average members of the population” (Maxwell 2013:92). Worth remembering is that by population in this context is not the teacher in general, since that is not what the participants in the study exemplify. Instead, it refers to teachers who are consciously teaching with a focus on challenges either in the form of teachers in National Education teaching students categorised as gifted, teachers in the IBDP or in the Peak Programme. At the same time, Maxwell emphasises the

significance of also capturing the heterogeneity of the population. Even in the small sample included in the thesis there are some indications of such. Firstly, the National Education teachers exemplify the whole range of teachers from primary school, via middle school, to lower and upper secondary school. In addition, even if mathematics turned out to be a common denominator between three of the teachers, other subjects are also exemplified (see introduction Chapter 10). In the IB sample, all teachers teach Theory of Knowledge (ToK), but in combination with a variety of subject areas, including English, economics, psychology, and mathematics. The three teachers teaching in the Peak Programme, exemplify the three varieties of Peak Programmes available, meaning in the sciences, in the humanities and in the arts.

Nevertheless, more reliable data could have been gained if the descriptions by the teachers had been complemented by observations of the teachers at work, which was part of the original project design. As an example, in analysing the data, the accounts by the primary and middle school teachers focus more on describing the structures of their teaching and the materials they use than on the subtleties of the adjustments that make teaching more challenging. In comparison, the teachers at upper secondary level describe more content and level of analysis. Why this is the case and what this difference means could have been given further insights via observations. In relation to this aspect, I made an attempt to complement the descriptions by gaining access to a sample of exercises and assessments tasks from all teachers. Of particular interest here was what type of questions the students were asked since more complex and second order questions is a key component in making education more challenging. Unfortunately, I did not receive materials from all participants which meant this form of additional data had to be omitted from the analysis. On the same note, in a great deal of previous research, as well as in my own study, the voice of the students themselves is missing. Instead, their contribution is limited to the way they are referred to by the other actors. What this means is that the argument in the thesis is based only on the descriptions made by the teachers, and how they perceive their teaching. Similarly, in analysing the historical policy texts, nothing is claimed about what actually took place in teaching at the time, since such a reconstruction would be difficult to make. Neither is that part of the scope of investigation in the current piece of work.

## Theoretical Concerns

Concerning validity in relation to my choice in theory, a common critique against discourse analysis is to do with the interpretation of meaning and objectivity. In response to such a critique, Wodak and Meyer (2016) state that discourse analysis offers a reading that is done in a *systematic manner*. This means that rather than drawing conclusions from isolated instances, actions are interpreted in relation to the context and circumstances in which they are

said or written, including expected norms of the situation. Actions are also interpreted in relation to other people's interactions, through reactions and cooperation. Moreover, the critical aspect of discourse analysis means that "the critical subject [i.e. the researcher] is not a detached observer but s/he looks at society with a fresh and sceptical eye". By pointing to what could be different the researcher implicitly argues for change (Wodak & Meyer 2016:8). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) relate further to such an aspect by referring to what they describe as *reflexive objectivity*. What it means is that the researcher can put forward a particular interpretation by making sure it is well-founded by the support of examples, and quotations. Validity, therefore, is interpreted as present if the conclusions follow from the premisses and that justifications are given (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:260).

Carol Bacchi (2009), states something similar in saying that the aim in policy and discourse analysis "is to challenge problem representation that might have deleterious effects, and to suggest that issues could be thought about in ways that might avoid at least some of these effects" (Bacchi 2009:44). At the same time, she emphasises to focus on the representation of a problem - not on the problem in itself - and of *self-reflexivity*. What she means is that the researcher needs to certify he or she does not buy into representations they agree with without questioning where they come from. She refers to three components as evidence of such reflexivity; to use relevant and related text examples in the data collection, to show complexity by acknowledging contesting positions, and to show a solid understanding of context (Bacchi 2009:19ff).

In the current thesis these issues relate back to the transparency and thick descriptions. It meant I needed to study the education system and the 'differentiation question' from a historical standpoint without assuming any outcome in particular in relation to how giftedness was or is perceived. This means that in spite of evidence presented in former research concerning the study situation for gifted students, I kept an open mind for any contradictory claims to support the results in my own study. My extensive readings of the documents and Green Papers, as well as the use of multiple interviews are designed to capture the context of both the participants and the text samples in place of single interviews and short extracts of text. The research questions relating to these issues are consciously formulated as open 'how-questions', which means interpretations of the data have been open to different and complex outcomes. In choosing what rationalities to focus on, after the SMART analysis and some initial readings of policy texts quantification and medicalisation were selected as of possible importance. These early impressions made it relevant to study if such presence could be confirmed more widely and, in that case, how such rationalities could be retraced. It means, the extent of their relevance was not clear from the beginning, even if the structure of the thesis including the presentation of theory before data may make it appear that way.

## Definitions

Another key question in evaluating validity concerns how the cluster concept is used to compare the development of the conceptualisation of giftedness. Chapter 3 outlines the aim of the cluster as being to represent these changes visually. It is therefore a dynamic model showing which aspects of giftedness, as a cluster of different elements, are operating at a particular time, not only in the policy documents, but also from the point of view of the teacher as expressed in the interview texts. However, the success of this representation depends on a clear and consistent procedure for interpreting what is found in these texts in terms of elements in the cluster model (Bryman 2016:41). What guides this interpretation? Some interpretations take the form of what in literary analysis is referred to as, *direct characterisations* (Romberg 1970:144). This means that specific words occur in the description that are explicitly present in the cluster model. For example, there are direct references to ‘fast learning’ and ‘high performance’ which occur in the description of two of the cluster hexagons. Other interpretations are *indirect categorisations* (Romberg 1970:144). This means that, although qualities describing cluster elements are not explicitly found in the text, it is possible to infer them from the context. For example, a teacher referring to students being accelerated implies that fast learning is taking place. Direct or indirect characterisations allow a particular cluster element to be highlighted.

A further problem might be the selection of the descriptors in the cluster. As clarified in Chapter 3, I was guided by the SMART review limited to Web of Science and Scopus. Together the samples are to 60 percent dominated by research published and done in the United States. Out of the remaining 40 percent only two articles were from non-western countries, one from China and one from Singapore. This means that in forming the cluster other possible conceptions of giftedness and in relation to education systems from other parts of the world have been underrepresented. On the one hand, it could be argued it generates a cultural bias. On the other hand, the Swedish educational context is also within a western setting which makes the findings in SMART analysis relevant even if not fully in agreement. Furthermore, the method of selection as described by Nilholm suggests that the most cited studies are the most significant in the field (Nilholm 2017:9). This is based on the assumption that the most cited works are the most relevant but overlooks why these are cited. As a result, the sample is based on a quantitative rather than qualitative measurement<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, since the number of citations are likely to increase with time, the method may neglect more recent studies. Both of these consequences are seen as a limitations of the SMART method.

In interpreting presence of the cluster descriptors additional issues may occur. For example, in finding participants for her 35-year longitudinal case

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<sup>19</sup> Ydesen, C. private conversation 2023-06-12.

study, Joan Freeman describes how teachers have pointed her to certain students “who they saw as gifted but who would have been below average in a high-powered school” (Freeman 2010:9). In the same way, both high performing and fast learning in a system reluctant to measure excellence might mean the students referred to in the majority of examples in my own study are actually not gifted. They are faster and perform at a level higher than expectation, but we know little about the extent of their speed and level of learning. Herein lies a problem generated by the Swedish education system itself since, as the analysis will show, there has been limited (if any) interest in finding out the full extent of these students’ abilities. As can be seen in the presentation of the cluster in Chapter 3, for these two characteristics to be interpreted as aspects of giftedness, fast learning should be combined with learning at a deep level, and high performance is what takes place at an exceptional level. Still, to avoid further complexity, these extra distinctions were not made in the analysis. Instead, I decided to interpret references to high-performance and fast learning as relating to the cluster concept even if there is uncertainty whether they also refer to the additional aspects. It means further, that references can be seen as very limited recognitions of the abilities included in the definition of giftedness. A limitation of this study, therefore, is that it might be *too* inclusive in terms of the category of the gifted.

A final validity aspect in matters to do with definitions is what in the thesis has been interpreted as enactment. To simplify the analysis, formulation of policy has been interpreted as primarily taking place at the level of government, SNAE, the School Inspectorate and SPSM while enactment has been read into the actions by the teachers. On the other hand, once an idea has got inserted into the system it moves back and forth between the central and the local arena and between the actors of the education system as “it is always in a state of becoming” (Ball 1993:11). This means that in a sense what all actors do is a form of enactment. The Lindensjö and Lundgren cell model chosen for the current thesis limits the complexity of the relationship between the actors and how they influence each other to act and enact giftedness in policy, or not. Thereby, the areas open for further research into giftedness, policy and the actors involved in enacting education are many.

## Part 2



# GIFTEDNESS AS TEXT

In response to the research question on conceptualisation of giftedness in text, this second part of the thesis contains an analysis of the policy documents. As the documents are preceded by extensive work done by specifically appointed committees, a report by the Rearing Committee from 1820 and two Green Papers are also foregrounded in the analysis. The papers from the 1940 School Committee and the 1946 School Commission both argue for a particular solution to the 'differentiation question' and as such had strong impact on the reform work (Dahllöf 1967, Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006, Marklund 1985).

The analysis describes what arguments dominated the reform work and the routes travelled in formulating and regulating education in relation to the categorisation of giftedness, teaching strategies to teach such students and the role of the teacher in teaching and identifying them. More specifically, based on a suggestion by van Dijk (2007:35) it investigates:

- *Topic selection* - what the text is about
- *Schematic organisation* - what is emphasised and left out of the argument
- *Lexicalisation* interpreted from values found in word choice.
- *Local meanings* deducible from implications, presuppositions, and assumptions

As clarified in Chapter 3, presence of giftedness is interpreted as any statements referring to one or more of the cluster characteristics. In a similar manner, gifted education is interpreted to mean any referring to the teaching strategies and content adjustments as summarised by Rogers (2007) and Tomlinson (c.f.1996).

The following part of the thesis is divided into four chapters corresponding to significant stages in the reform work. Chapter 6 encompasses documents from the divided school system from 1820 until 1928. Chapter 7 covers documents from the 1940's, when the integration aims moved into an intense period, until its realisation in the 1960's. Chapter 8, analyses documents in the period after the point of integration until the most recent revision in 2022. Finally, in Chapter 9 a sample of additional documents are described and analysed. These are more recent or contemporary text sources by the three gov-

ernment agencies, SNAE, the School Inspectorate and SPSM specifically addressing giftedness in education. At the end of Chapter 9, a summary of the trajectories of the reform work is given indicating what context contemporary teachers work within as they conceptualise giftedness by enactment.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> To clarify, all sources referred to in the following chapters are originally published in Swedish and translated into English by me.

## Chapter 6: Education in Parallel-1820 to 1928

### Early Grammar School and ‘The Genius’

#### 1820

As we saw in the historical background in Chapter 2, the enrolment requirements to Grammar School meant that access to secondary education was strictly controlled. Only those of the right sex, religion, manners, health, and financial status were admitted. But there was also a reformist current that placed the whole Grammar School system under scrutiny. For example, according to the Rearing Committee (*Uppfostringskommiteen*) involved in the reform work, it was argued that the reason behind a high number of Grammar School students failing the exams was due to “faulty teaching methods” (RCR 1820:17)<sup>21</sup> too excessively based on repetition of content and memorizing. Moreover, teaching was claimed to “mistreat” the powers of imagination, and that “society and humankind gain little, or nothing, by cold and speculating people, armed only with the ability to reason and memory-based knowledge” (RCR 1820:12).

In the Grammar School statute from 1820<sup>22</sup> only limited arguments are provided concerning the topic of teaching strategies. Similarly, passages relating to the topic of role of the teacher concern mostly how to discipline students, either by rewarding or punishing them. In terms of van Dijk’s schematic organisation, there is an emphasis on the responsibility for high-content teaching and being a Christian role model. Concerning categorisation, slightly more details are provided. For example, the sheer volume of content students are required to master implies high expectations regarding their general ability. In addition, it is claimed that “earlier promotion etc. is an encouragement and a reward for the young whose progress extends further than his peers, due to his genius (*snille*) and rare diligence” (GSS 1820 4:6§). A few sections later conditions are added: “[u]nder no circumstances may one allow promotion without the youngster having certified, that he not simply by memory, that is mechanical, but also through understanding has mastered what is required, which

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<sup>21</sup> Uppfostrings-Comiteen (1820) *Anvisningar och råd till lärare om sättet att verkställa hwad Kongl Maj:t i Nåder uti Skol-Ordningen af den 16 Dec. 1820 stadgat och anbefallt*, my translation

<sup>22</sup> *Kongl. Maj:ts Nådiga Stadga för Rikets Allmänna Elementar-lärowerk* (1820), my translation.

is impossible without the ability to work independently and devoted practice” (GSS1820:11§). There are three features of this passage that are particularly interesting for our analysis. The first is the positive lexicalisation of a form of acceleration, however, treated as a reward rather than as a teaching strategy. Secondly, the statement defines that what counts as exceptional ability is to be able to understand and to think independently, and not just to memorize. Thirdly, ‘genius’ is used to categorise the student in question, as someone in a different category than the rest due to his “rare” diligence.

In the Statute no further definition of ‘the genius’ is given but in the report by the Rearing Committee the following can be read: “he will characterise genius itself if he expresses with ease what he has fathomed, at the first instant develops the concept, gives it new definitions and in addition possesses an exceptionally good memory” (RCR 1820:11). Nevertheless, even if the committee report provides a positive recognition of such ability, somewhat ambivalently, the quotation continues: “geniuses rarely become useful civil servants and where this precious gift of nature truly exists, it takes its particular route and decides its own independent position”. Therefore, in contrast to such skills, the committee concludes that the aim of education is “dependent on common and even fathoming gifts<sup>23</sup>, [...] since only that is what can be attained” (RCR 1820:11).

Looking more into what skills are promoted in the documents, schematically there seems to be a contradiction between the previous passage exalting independent thinking and understanding and a continued emphasis on factual knowledge lexicalised in the form of “to know”, “to know by heart”, “to recognise” and “to give an account of” (GSS 1820, 6:1-8§). There is the expectation that, as the student advances through the system, progress is expected in quantitative terms, implied by an increase in content from “partial knowledge of” in Year 1 to “complete and extensive knowledge” in Year 7. There is no reference to expectations regarding progress in qualitative terms which is absent from the document. One possible exception is in the last year of school where students are required to “master subject content both in terms of memory and *understanding*” (GSS 1820, 6:9§, italics added). In a sense this could be seen as creating a contradiction between the definition of the genius student, on the one hand, and what knowledge is valued by the system, on the other.

*In summary*, with reference to the first two documents from 1820, the gifted student is acknowledged and is categorised as genius. The student in question is directly characterised, in terms of descriptors in the cluster concept, as a student who performs at a high level of skill with an ‘exceptionally good memory’, a fast learner who ‘express with ease’ and exhibits ‘progress [that]

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<sup>23</sup> The actual word used is ‘fattningsgáfwa’ a compound noun consisting of *fattning*, ‘to understand’, or ‘to fathom’ and *gáfwa* which means ‘gift’. To keep to the idea behind the phenomenon as something given, I created the neologism ‘fathoming gift’.

extends further'. To be driven by self-motivation and autonomy can be interpreted in 'devoted practice', 'diligence' and 'independent'. Similarly, the categorisation also implies elements of creative novelty and unconventional ways of thinking through the ability to 'develop the concept' and 'give it new definitions'. The way the students are able to understand and not just memorise implies an ability to reason. The lexicalisation involves the adjectives 'rare', 'precocious' and 'exceptional' indicating a positive categorisation of a person out of the ordinary. Relating these aspects to the cells in the cluster concept results in the following illustration, where the blue colour represents the areas identified in the text documents:

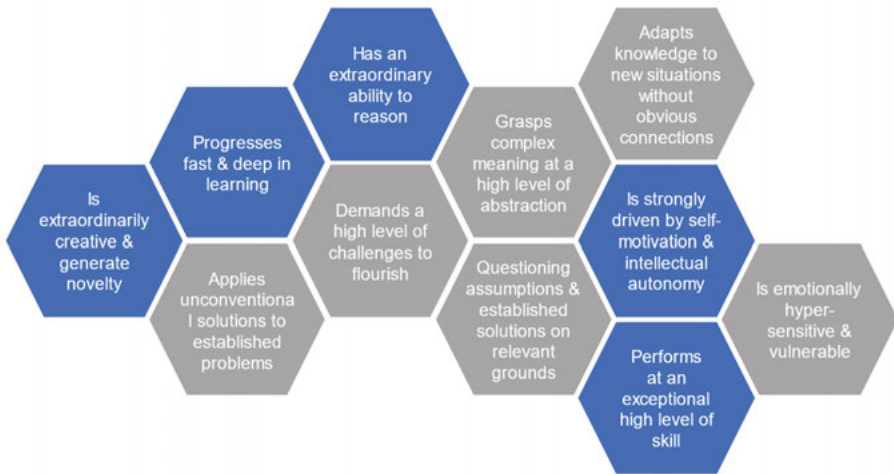


Figure 6.1 Giftedness in Grammar School Policy 1820

However, while indicating an awareness of such a person, and in a perhaps a more multi-faceted manner than expected, gifted students stand out as abundant as their abilities are described in the negation 'not useful' and since what should be in focus of the teachers' attention is "common", "even fathoming gifts". A plausible interpretation therefore is that these first Grammar School documents do not deny the existence of giftedness, but rather affirm that there is no use for such a student.

### 1856 to 1878

After 1820, three revisions of Grammar School statutes were made in quite close proximity, in 1856, 1859 and 1878. These were followed by the publication of another statute in 1905 and by the first curriculum for the Latin-free Real School in 1906. On the topic of teaching strategies and schematic organisation, from 1859 there is an emphasis on the importance of uniformity and

for: “all schools to be of similar type” (GSS 1859:2§)<sup>24</sup>. This also affects the topic of the role of the teacher by emphasising the need to cooperate and to coordinate teaching to certify “invariance” (*likformighet*) (GSS 1859:99§). Another example of uniformity is the requirement that teachers are ‘to confer’ in order to present a common teaching plan for their subject and to meet regularly to “confer about an invariant way to teach their subjects, as far as possible” (GSS 1878:120§).<sup>25</sup>

On the topic of teaching strategies, acceleration continues to be mentioned, but in comparison to the preceding text, no longer lexicalised as a reward but as a teaching strategy to respond to students who are ahead of expected performance. One example here is early enrolment. Students who are “slightly younger” than the normal age of nine years can be offered early enrolment, if there are “particular circumstances” (GSS1859:28§). In the statute from 1878, an argument is presented in favour of accelerating students to a higher class than normally at the beginning of the year (GSS 1878:32§). In estimating ability, teachers should “confirm that the disciple [gains knowledge] in relation to the extent of his fathoming gifts expected for his age” (GSS 1856:120§). The relationship between age and ability is to be used as motivation for reducing demands on the students, for example, by limiting the number of lessons per day and the amount of homework (GSS 1856:120§) and preventing students from being overworked (GSS 1905 Ch.3:145§3). Of interest here is not the actual reductions in content since the amount of knowledge the Grammar school students were supposed to master can be seen as excessive and some reduction could be expected. In addition, school days were long, homework was given daily and there were assignments to do over weekends and holidays. The interesting point is that there are no indications of how the teachers were to find out whether performance agrees with age expectation or not, which means schematically such guidance is left out of the text.

In contrast to the role of the teacher as a disciplining body, the documents also present formal structures regarding the topic of pastoral care. There is a gradual building of a system around such responsibilities. For example, in the statute from 1856, there is an emphasis on responsibility for students outside of the classroom, in particular the ones who are “without a stable home and parental care” (GSS 1856:468).<sup>26</sup> In the 1878 statute the school doctor is introduced to monitor the students’ level of health and development, particularly that of poor students (GSS 1878:124§). The statute form 1905<sup>27</sup>, introduces

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<sup>24</sup> *Kongl. Maj:ts Nådiga Stadga för Rikets Allmänna Elementar-läroverk* (1859), my translation

<sup>25</sup> *Kongl. Maj:ts Nådiga Stadga för Rikets Allmänna läroverk* (1878), my translation

<sup>26</sup> *Kongl. Maj:ts Nådiga Stadga för Rikets Allmänna Elementar-läroverk* (1856), my translation

<sup>27</sup> *Kongl. Maj:ts Nådiga Stadga för Rikets Allmänna läroverk* (1905), my translation

the tutor (*klassföreståndare*) who should “aim for a more personal involvement and to find out about the students’ individual predispositions and circumstances, as well as their academic progress, diligence and behaviour” (GSS 1905 Ch3:138§). In the same document, it is argued teacher cooperation should be extended further to include teacher assemblies (*klasskonferenser*) as a forum for “monitoring the disciples’ diligence and behaviour and determining if there is any concern for action” (GSS 1905, Ch 5:171§). The lexicalisation referring to parental care and personal involvement emphasises that such a commitment involves a caring attitude; there is a local meaning (van Dijk) at work here in the sense that monitoring implies the responsibility to keep an observant eye on the students.

## 1928

Moving a few years forward to 1928, there is already a step towards the integration to come. It becomes possible to transfer to Grammar School after four years in Folk School. However, acceptance into the grammar school system was still based on entry tests aiming to certify the student possessed ‘the right level of intellectual development and disposition’ as well as academic ability. As the two systems start to converge, teaching begins to be organised around more electives. In order to teach a more heterogeneous student body, a wider range of choice is needed. In the Grammar School statute from 1928<sup>28</sup>, two key concepts are introduced around which teaching should be organised. The first is ‘independence’ where it is argued, in far more explicit terms than previously, that students should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, resulting in the application of more self-organised activities. The second concept is ‘individuality’ meaning that teaching for a group in general should be complemented by tasks designed “according to the student’s predisposition and interests” (GSS1928:46§).

The introduction of these concepts means changes in the topics of the role of the teacher and related teaching strategies. From 1928, it is argued that teachers should teach using more inquisitive methods, and to become more of a supervisor who supports the students by suggesting appropriate literature and helping in organising their work. Parallel to this, the topic of pastoral care is also expanded. Teachers now develop further responsibilities lexicalised as ‘*in loco parentis*’ (or, in place of parents). This includes, as previously, monitoring students’ progress. In addition, they are to investigate reasons for absence, and even to make house calls to certify the students’ well-being.

In the 1928 statute there are also arguments in support of making adjustments in accordance with ability. For example, more instructions about enrichment are introduced through a complex system in which study of a ‘subsidiary subject’ could be offered to the student “in relation to his academic

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<sup>28</sup> SFS 1928:412 *Kungl. Maj:ts stadga för rikets allmänna läroverk: given Stockholms slott den 24 september 1928*, my translation

ability” (*studiebegåvning*)<sup>29</sup> (GSS1928: 9§b). Another type of enrichment activity mentioned is to offer students to take on an ‘Independent Study’ during the summer holiday. Both enrichment activities are additional to the regular curriculum and by default are omitted in deciding the final grade of the student unless they specifically request that they are included. The possibility of accelerating a student by moving them on by a year in the normal progression is also mentioned. This section of the text describes two kinds of student for whom such measures are intended. Either they are meant for students “due to academic talent” (*begåvning*) or for those “who fulfil the necessary requirements” (GSS1928: 39§). What these might be is again left without further clarification.

*To summarise*, within the time-period from 1856 to 1928, the Grammar School documents change in schematic organisation of the argument. Instead of education as strictly corrective and based on single structure, it is to be more flexible and less demanding. Sections of the text addressing pastoral care structures begin to expand and include more institutional roles and forums in which pastoral care is appropriate, and there is an increasing concern about student well-being, lexicalised in terms of the teacher playing a parental type of role. In effect, these changes place an increased level of responsibility on the teacher by expecting him to respond to a variety of circumstances through individualised teaching. At the end of the period, acceleration is thus a manifestation of individualised teaching and is no longer a form of reward. Another manifestation of individualised teaching is the introduction of more electives and enrichment tasks.

A propos the topic of categorisation and the schematic organisation of the argument: from 1856 the documents leave out any references to ‘the genius’. Instead, the students are categorised as differing in ‘fathoming gifts’, ‘interests’ and ‘predispositions’, but most strikingly age is to be used as a norm to guide expectation on performance. In the document from 1928 some students are categorised as ‘academically talented’, but again this is not elaborated further.

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<sup>29</sup> To translate the concept ‘*begåvning*’ is complex. Its relationship to giftedness could be described as asymmetrical since to be gifted is part of being ‘*begåvad*’, but to be *begåvad* does not by necessity mean to be giftedness. Therefore, in these examples ‘academic ability’ and ‘academic talent’ was chosen rather than giftedness.

One possible interpretation of this term implies an ability to perform school tasks at a high level of skill. Therefore, in comparison to the illustration from the 1820, there are fewer cells in the cluster model that are referenced in these documents. There are no references to independence and unconventional thinking associated with the category of genius since this category is no longer in use. Instead, references become focused on acceleration, fast learning, and high ability, visualised in the illustration below.

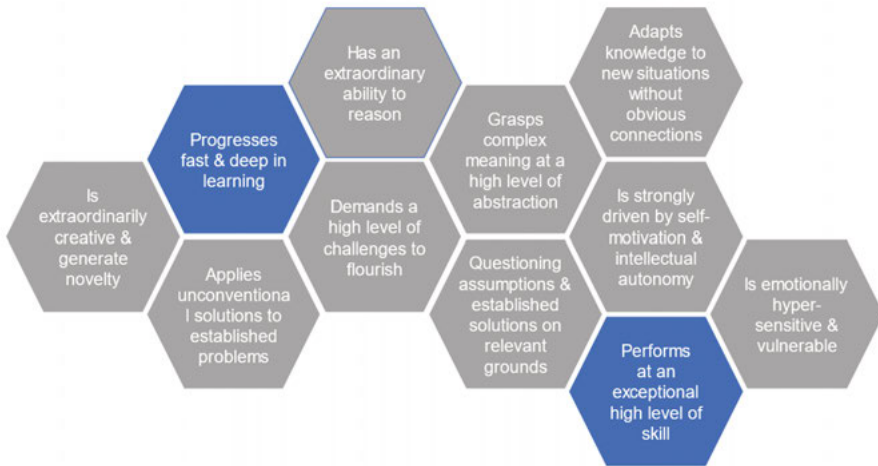


Figure 6:2 Giftedness in Grammar School Policy 1856/1928

## Early Folk School and ‘The Practically Able’

### 1882 to 1897

The historical background in Chapter 2 described how the Folk School system was first established in 1842 for the purpose of providing students with a basic level of knowledge and skills in a limited number of subjects. In 1882, the Folk School statute underwent its first revision, followed by others in 1897 and 1921. When read in succession, two processes of change can be detected. As far as the topic of regulation is concerned, these revisions give a more definite shape to this form of schooling. More details are prescribed in text and less is left for the local parishes to decide. In turn, this means an increase in centralisation and control, which in terms of local meaning, implies a higher status for the Folk School as an educational institution. In addition, there are increased demands on teacher qualification and there is an expansion of educational content as more subjects are added to the curriculum and grading is introduced into the Folk School for the first time.

Despite these changes, the documents continue to imply a low academic level of teaching and learning in this school system. The documents assume low expectations regarding the general ability level of students. On the topic of the role of the teacher, the schematical organisation in the documents is directed towards the delivery of content. This is lexicalised in the following terms: Content should be delivered “simply, clear and in an approachable manner” (FSS 1882:29§).<sup>30</sup> Examples in support of such a view are found in the syllabus for Swedish in the Folk School curriculum from 1889 where it is argued that: “[w]hilst a more excessive treatment of language studies cannot be included in the Folk School syllabus, what will be delivered in this subject has been reduced to a minimum” (FSC 1889:44-45).<sup>31</sup> The negative lexicalisation of the statement is present both in the impossibility in the word ‘cannot’ and the idea that it should be ‘reduced to a minimum’. A similar statement is found in the description of History: “focus should be on clear illustrations of events and personalities of significance [...] since more extensive historical knowledge hardly can be given to the children in Folk School” (FSC 1889:46). In these documents there is a total schematic omission of any characteristic of students that could relate to the descriptors in the cluster concept. Nor are there any references to teaching strategies in the form of acceleration. Indeed, there is evidence for the opposite. Instead of early enrolment, late enrolment is stated as a possibility. From 1897, two alternative forms of Folk School education are initiated, which, to some extent, recognise students within the system as having different abilities. Nevertheless, both alternatives are for corrective purposes, being negatively lexicalised as for students of “bad influence on others” due to “severe maladaptation” or for “students lacking in fathoming gifts” (FSS 1897:42§).<sup>32</sup>

## 1919

In the historical background, Burman (2014) described the aim of Folk School to be socialising the poorer part of the population. This is expressed in the Folk School curriculum from 1919 as a concern for cultivating the working-class citizen. For example, classes in mathematics include accountancy and encourage frugality, classes in Swedish should aim to reduce signs of regional accents, and classes in Physical Education should include anti-smoking campaigns and teach the importance of keeping to a healthy diet. Schematically, teaching exercises, such as how to maintain “a good posture, and bodily move-

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<sup>30</sup> *Kongl. Maj:ts Förnyade Nådiga Stadga angående Folk-undervisningen i Riket* (1882), my translation.

<sup>31</sup> *Normalplan för undervisningen i folksskolor och småskolor* (1889), my translation.

<sup>32</sup> *Kongl. Maj:ts Förnyade Nådiga Stadga angående Folk-undervisningen i Riket* (1897), my translation.

ments and ways to rest” (FSC1919:125§), are promoted in terms of the lexicalisation “of utility for a life in labour”.<sup>33</sup> Teaching should also make the children “used to order, cleanliness and frugality as well as to develop their practical abilities, and awaken their respect and will for domestic work” (FSC1919:146§). In comparison, no similar passage is to be found in the Grammar School documents. Therefore, concerning van Dijk’s ‘local meaning of the argument’, the fact that such activities are not necessary in Grammar school while Folk School students are taken to be in need of correction indicates just how differently students were categorised in the two systems.

This difference is also highlighted with respect to the topic of teaching strategies. The Folk School documents continue to argue for teaching to be adjusted according to the individual predisposition of the student, their “sense-making abilities, area of experience and interests” (FSC1919:26§). While such a concern could be seen as a receptivity to the Folk students’ educational needs, in terms of local meanings, it could also be interpreted as a continuation of the practice of categorising the Folk School student in terms of limited aptitude for theoretical knowledge and skills. Hence, when teaching, clarifying examples were to be taken from the students’ immediate surroundings and were to be kept simple.

Having said this, there is evidence in the 1919 Folk School curriculum for a first small acknowledgement of the possibility of high ability. In a section on the topic of strategies involved in teaching mathematics, it is stated that the ‘more precocious’ (*de mer försigkomna*) should be given additional and more demanding exercises. This exact lexicalisation stands out because it is the first example of such a positive acknowledgement of ability in a theoretical subject in the Folk School curriculum. A more detailed and more explicit example is found in the presentation of practically oriented subjects, in particular Craft and the description of students’ ability in Woodwork. Here the lexicalisation and emphasis of the argument changes. It is emphasised that “[e]very student should be allowed to progress in his work according to his endowment and skills, independently of the others”, and their “ability to take initiative and inventiveness should be encouraged” (FSC 1919:140§). Additional exercises should be made available for the ones who progress faster, also taking the student’s own wishes into account.

Significant though they are, these passages still only concern part the student population since they apply to Woodwork which was only available to male students. For female students, the focus of Craft classes is lexicalised as simple tasks of domestic utility, which are hygienic, practical, decorative, and economical. There is some recognition of difference in ability since provision of parallel exercises are mentioned. Nevertheless, schematically, the exercises need to be “possible to complete also by the slowest working student” (FSC 1919:140§) and they should be “of such simple kind the disciples are more or

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<sup>33</sup> *Undervisningsplan för rikets folkskolor* (1919). My translation.

less able to do them without support” (FSC1919:144§). This lexicalisation takes the edge off the extent to which these exercises may be considered to offer challenges.

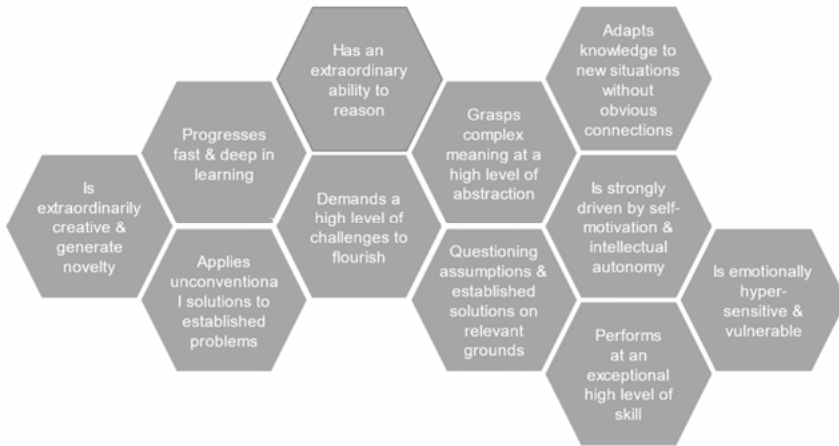


Figure 6:3 Giftedness in Folk School Policy 1842/1919

*To summarise*, even if there are small changes in the Folk School documents during this time period, the Folk School statutes continue to categorise their target group in terms of a low level of knowledge and ability as evidenced by low expectations regarding their performance in academic subjects. As a topic in these documents, the teachers’ role is to provide basic knowledge, but primarily to socialise the students. Toward the end of the period there is some recognition of varying ability among the students, but these passages concern standards that reach below rather than above expectation. In terms of van Dijk’s ‘local meaning’, it is reasonable to draw a first conclusion here that the Folk School statutes assume a student body in which there is a complete absence of any characteristic in the cluster, as visualised above, with the possible exception of male students’ abilities as skilful craftsmen.

## Conclusions

In agreement with claims in the historical background, the first period covered in the analysis is characterised by a clearly divided education system, in terms of structure, educational content, expectation on student ability, and the role of the teacher. The groups on each side of the divide are assumed to be homogeneous and are given crude categorisations.

In the very first Grammar School documents from 1820, giftedness is recognised in the form of genius, but at the same time there is a reluctance to acknowledge such abilities to the full. From 1856, the concept is left out of the curriculum. The students are categorised in general terms based on expectations on ability in relation to age. As we shall see, the connection between age and expected performance is of continued significance in these documents. In 1928, the concept lexicalised as “academic talent” is addressed through acceleration and a gradual availability of enrichment activities. This represents a move from a broader conception of the cluster to a narrower one limited to high ability and fast performance. Other than that, very little text refers to how students possessing attributes found in the cluster concept are to be taught.

In comparison, there is not much evidence at all of giftedness in the Folk School documents. A slight difference can be detected in performance expectations of male students between the earliest documents and the later ones, while female students continue to be categorised outside of high ability.

At the same time, within the early period there are examples of changes in the system as they are beginning to integrate. In the Grammar School documents, there is a reduction in demands, while the Folk School system places more demands on the student as more components of the system become formalised. In combination, the changes indicate a movement from either side towards the middle. Furthermore, both systems develop the topic of pastoral care by introducing additional structures to deal with student support and changing the role of the teacher by imposing extra pastoral responsibilities. These become even more significant in the next period of the analysis, when the ‘differentiation question’ is placed at the centre of the reform work.



## Chapter 7: Integration and Psychologization - 1940 to 1968

In the middle period, the reform work regarding integration of the two systems reached a key phase as the debate was no longer about *if* integration should take place, but *how* it should be done (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006:44-45). This is also a period when: “educational reform processes were more or less colonised by state committees and psychological-pedagogical science” (Lundahl 2006:1/2007:1:4). Two of these committees were appointed in close succession, one in 1940 and the other in 1946.

The 1940's also represents a crossroads in the history of Swedish education where the argument concerning the 'differentiation question' could have turned out quite differently. Therefore, the Green Papers produced by these two committees are seen as highly significant in setting out the path for later reform work, thus in the first section of the chapter presented alongside the statutes and curriculum. The chapter also includes policy documents published after the Green Papers. In the final section of the chapter, the first documents from the integrated system are analysed, marking the end of the middle period.

### Dividing Views on Differentiation - the 1940 School Committee

With the exception of vocational colleges in medicine, technology, and economics, there were only four institutions of higher education in Sweden at the beginning of the middle period. These were the universities at Uppsala, Lund, Stockholm, and Gothenburg. As part of their work, the 1940's School Committee invited one professor in Psychology and/or Pedagogy from each university to give their expert judgements on differentiation in education. Their responses are focused on questions relating to mental development and the relationship between age and ability, such as determining a suitable age for children to enrol in education. In addition, supposing that the parallel system would be reformed into one common system, they were asked to suggest an appropriate age for students to make the transition from general to specialised education. The experts were given two options to choose from: early differentiation after just four years of common education, or late differentiation after

six years. Additionally, the experts were asked to comment on the use of intelligence testing as a method for making such decisions.

### **Rudolf Anderberg**

In the paper, the first of the four professors to present his arguments is the Uppsala professor, Rudolf Anderberg. Instead of turning his attention directly to the topic of early or late differentiation, he starts by questioning what he calls “former psychological theories” and the connection between children’s intellectual ability and their stage in development. He refutes the idea that development occurs in a predetermined sequence and questions two assumptions: that teaching for children below the age of 11 should be focused only on “sensory perception, motoric ability and memory” and that subjects requiring “logical consideration and reasoning” should not be introduced before the age of 11 (SOU1943:19, 6). Instead, he argues that school enrolment and transition from Folk School to Grammar School should be based on the intellectual maturity of the child. This would be established by medical examination, including intelligence testing (SOU1943:19, 6-7).

For Anderberg the question of differentiation is not just a matter of age but also concerns the way the school system is organised. For example, he argues in favour of more organisational differentiation by establishing support units (*hjälpklasser*) for students with learning difficulties and he requests an expansion of vocational lines of education for the practically able. He claims further education at upper secondary level should be reserved for students who have the ability for this type of study, rather than “occupying places with students not receptive to this type of education, preventing them from commencing their education into vocational life” (SOU 1943:19, 15-17). On the other hand, students who are categorised as ‘precocious’ (*försigkomna*) should be allowed early enrolment. On the topic of identification of these students, Anderberg refers to research by Lewis Terman and his Stanford-Binet intelligence test<sup>34</sup>. In addition, the American school system is presented as a good example for running specialized classes for the gifted (*de särskilt begåvade*) and that: “any sustainable objection against [such classes] has not been voiced” (SOU 1943:19, 8).

On the topic of teaching, Anderberg emphasises the necessity of challenging gifted students in order to keep them intellectually stimulated, and to maintain their level of motivation. With reference to the psychologist Edward Thorndike, another of the pioneers in exploring intelligence<sup>35</sup>, Anderberg argues that:

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<sup>34</sup> Terman is one of the first to describe gifted education (Dai 2010:2).

<sup>35</sup> Thorndike is also referred to in the field of giftedness research as one of its early explorers (Dai 2010:2).

...without intense effort, a person will not reach his full potential. In our regular undifferentiated classes, the gifted (*den begåvade*) student is not confronted with the type of competition that truly sharpens his powers. The question is if it is not due to this particular circumstance that we may find one of the reasons behind the failure of the school's 'bright-lights' (*skolljus*) in later life (SOU1943:19, 8-9).

The cost of such negligence, according to Anderberg, may go as far as the 'bright lights' becoming in need of 'rehabilitation' which may not be successful in all cases. Furthermore, he issues a warning against ignoring the need to combine high level of intelligence with strong work ethic and continues:

If in education, the gifted (*den begåvade*) never have to overcome real challenges, it cannot be expected that he will put in the effort needed to gain a result in life [...] Already from this point of view, a warning should be issued against all education being built on the student's own preferences and initiative [and] to transform all education into play (SOU1943:19, 8-9).

There is no direct categorisation of gifted students given in Anderberg's text. Instead, he uses a variety of positive lexicalisations, such as 'the precocious' (*de försigkomna*) (SOU1943:19, 7) 'the gifted' (*de särskilt begåvade*) 'the bright-lights' (*skolljus*) (SOU1943:19, 8) 'the intellectually well-developed' (*de intellektuellt välutvecklade*) (SOU1943:19, 10), those triggered by competition and the opportunity to 'sharpen' their powers. Still, it is possible to infer a definition from the behaviour he ascribes. The gifted student is appropriate for early enrolment and is thus a fast learner, but also someone who will fail in education, perhaps even in life, if not challenged in school. There is a stark contrast between the positive lexicalisation of the description of the gifted student on the one hand, and the negative lexicalisations of the consequences of their neglect: 'failure', 'rehabilitation' and 'warning'. While he argues that students of different abilities exist at all socio-economic levels of the population, he concedes that previous studies have indicated that more children at the "privileged levels of population" are ahead (SOU1943:19, 9). In choosing what shall have precedence - social stratification or ability - he argues that keeping students together in heterogeneous classes makes teaching difficult since it is then impossible to support the wide range of abilities. Therefore, Anderberg concludes, differentiating students according to ability is the best option since "it provides more justice in the individual case", even if it might mean "dividing along social lines", which is not "ideal" (SOU 1943:19, 9).

### **David Katz**

Another of the professors, David Katz from Stockholm University, takes a different line on the topic of differentiation. While Anderberg referred to Ter-

man and Thorndike, Katz is strongly influenced by Freud and by a psychodynamic view of development, and his contribution in terms of schematic organisation places emphasis on the categorisation of students as vulnerable and sensitive. Katz points to puberty as a period of concern identified by “extensive lability and strong mood swings”, “when all soul connections dissolve” and where the student is “like a ship without rudder, driven by unpredictable natural forces” (SOU 1943:19, 49-50). The lexicalisation used to build his argument is emotionally coloured and supported by superlatives, such as ‘extensive’ and ‘strong’ together with the changes found in ‘unpredictable’, ‘mood swings’, dissolution and ‘lability’. He supports his argument by referring to ‘natural forces’ implying a deterministic causal relationship between the student’s emotional status and age. According to Katz, the person at risk in this sensitive phase resulting in exhaustion in, for example, a competitive class climate. Therefore, he concludes that activities in class should be based instead on collective processes and cooperation, aimed to create an “active community” (SOU 1943:19, 54). On the topic of teaching strategies, Katz suggests a general focus on deceleration rather than acceleration, for example, by doubling the amount of time spent on theoretical subjects. This would mean that it would take students two years to complete a course instead of one. This is what is needed to reduce the number of hours spent in school during what he argues is a precarious phase in development.

Katz has more to say about the topic of development especially the predetermined link between age and ability. He states that, around the age of 16, the situation for the students stabilises; they become less self-critical and their interest in school deepens. Even if the child could think abstractly before then, puberty gets in the way. Such a condition is simply predetermined. Therefore, the child should be placed in as stable a situation as possible. Katz comes to the rather unexpected conclusion that any differentiation should be undertaken earlier rather than later since disorienting changes would then be made before the child enters puberty. Katz writes: “the more differentiated and complex the surrounding, the more difficult it is for the young person to adjust” (SOU 1943:19, 51).

On the topic of identification, Katz argues in favour of using IQ-tests, both as a basis for differentiation and as a way to pick out children suitable for further studies. IQ testing is also to be used to support arguments for pre-puberty differentiation. The idea is that the test will then generate more reliable measurements, since they are executed before the students become unstable. Here both lexicalisation and schematic organisation show up the emphasis in this text. Students are ‘hindered’, have ‘difficulties’ and conditions are ‘unstable’ presupposing if such conditions are created negative consequences will follow.

A second contrast to Anderberg is present in Katz’ treatment of the topic of categorisation where the emphasis is placed on the general student not the exceptional one. There is only one reference to giftedness in the whole text

occurring at the very end where he mentions ‘the gifted disciples’ (*de begåvade lärjungarna*). Such students should be supported by enrolling them in education one year earlier than other children, since it would mean they complete elementary education sooner, which in turn would take them to university sooner (SOU 1943:19, 63). In terms of van Dijk’s local meaning, this last comment seems to imply that to educate the gifted is not of relevance until university level, according to Katz.

### **John Landquist**

In contrast to the other two, John Landquist, the representative from Lund University, emphasises the topic of development on children enrolling in education later rather than earlier. However, like Katz, he supports his argument by referring to the effects puberty is claimed to have on the intellectual abilities of young students. For example, Landquist argues that education should not end before the end of puberty since before then ‘the youngster’ is not mature enough to take on a professional commitment. Secondly, only after puberty do some of the theoretical subjects become intellectually accessible to the child. Thirdly, he claims up to that point children are more susceptible to moral deviance. Somewhat contradictory, he also argues that the need for education ceases to exist at the time of puberty and: “the excessive amount of time spent in education [...] for many people results in discomfort and harm [and] it carries a conflict between civilization and human nature” (SOU 1943:19, 67). The argument is again made through negative lexicalisation such as ‘excessive amount’, ‘discomfort’ and ‘harm’ but also through reference to a pre-determined ‘human nature’. Landquist argues, via references to Dewey’s pragmatic view of education, that life experience and the life of work are viable alternatives to school. In support of such argument, Landquist refers to Alva and Gunnar Myrdal and their work *Contact with America* (1941) and how American schools can be seen as role models in their aim to prepare the students to become democratic citizens by connecting school and society.

On the topic of organisation, Landquist argues that an undifferentiated school system is monotonous, “without any sense of community” and one where “dissatisfaction grows on both sides” of the ability divide (SOU 1943:19, 70). This has a negative effect on the gifted (*de begåvade*); “they will not do any work. It becomes them too simple, school will bore them” (SOU 1943:19, 71) and the livelier of them will become disruptive. On the other hand, he admits the possibility that if the gifted remain in regular classes they might influence others positively, but only if the distance in ability between them and the other students is not too vast. Then their presence will have demotivating effects on the others. As an example, he states that when what he characterises as the ‘weaker students’ were kept in regular classes they turned dull and stopped making an effort, since the distance between them and the other students grew too large. According to Landquist the situation changed when the ‘weaker students’ were placed in special units, as they

went back to working again. Therefore, he concludes: “The one who wants the best development of personal abilities has to accept differentiation” (SOU 1943:19, 70).

In contrast to Anderberg and Katz, on the topic of categorisation Landquist’s contribution refers to several more categories of students. The gifted he characterises in positive lexicalisation as ‘the academically gifted’ (*skolbegåvning*) (SOU 1943:19, 72) and ‘the talented’ (*talangen*) (SOU 1943:70). Another similarly positive categorisation is to do with being virtuous, such as ‘the desirable citizen’ (SOU 1943:19, 75) and ‘the accomplished person’ (SOU 1943:19, 76), but also as ‘the boisterous (*livliga*) talents’ (SOU 1943:19, 71). As with his colleagues, Landquist does not state explicitly how he understands these categories. Indirectly though, he seems to characterise these as academically gifted, boisterous, bored if not challenged and as students who want to move on swiftly in their learning, a categorisation he shares with Anderberg.

### **John Elmgren**

The final contribution by John Elmgren from Gothenburg University is written, more strongly than those of his colleagues, in a scientific voice, using graphs, tables, and quantitative data to support his argument. On the topic of development, Elmgren refers to the empiricist John Locke’s thoughts on: “health first, then character and knowledge last” (SOU 1943:19, 23). Furthermore, with reference to the psychologists William Stern and Jean Piaget, he argues emphatically that development is something strictly law bound, lexicalised as “a biological fact”, and accords with ‘anthropometric theory’ that intelligence is correlated with the growth in size of the cerebellum. He also claims that “a postponing of the more abstract features of knowledge to the latter part of compulsory education after the age of 11 to 12, would mean a natural adaptation of educational progression to the stages in psychological development” (SOU 1943:19, 25). Therefore, Elmgren concludes that teaching prior to the age of 12 should focus only on basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. When the child reaches somewhere between the age of 12 to 14 an “interchange in function spontaneously matures as the child’s memory skills goes from mechanical learning to a direct search for meaning in a given material, and to learning of what is significantly relevant” (SOU 1943:19, 26).

On the topic of categorisation, the schematic emphasis in Elmgren’s argument is, to a large extent, either on an unspecified child in general, or a child who suffers developmental defects due to a number of environmental and social factors. He categorises the latter using negative lexicalisations such as: “the developmentally restrained” (*de utvecklingshämmade*), “psychopathic” (*psykopatiska*), “the problem child (*problembarnet*)” (SOU 1943:19, 33), or even “misfits” (*vanartiga*) (SOU 1943:19, 41). Other than that, an extensive part of Elmgren’s section of the paper, like Katz’ contribution, is directed towards the topic of stages in development and their effect on ability. He defines

puberty as a particularly sensitive period in a person's development, schematically emphasising how it determines when it is a good time to differentiate. However, in contrast to what Katz' concluded, Elmgren states:

From this point of view, a somewhat later differentiation is to be recommended. Because 'the growing' towards the latter part of pre-puberty (boys around the age of 14 and girls around the age of 13) most certainly are more aware of their predisposition and conditions and they can more easily be assessed by guardians and teachers.

Although, he continues:

On the other hand, it is clear how distinctive intellectual abilities make themselves known a great deal earlier, and that differentiation, therefore, is possible at an earlier stage, in particular for the academically gifted (*studiebegåvade*) (SOU 1943:19, 28).

Furthermore, on the topic of teaching strategies, Elmgren argues that differences in intelligence will be more widely distributed the older the child gets and that these "academically gifted" (*skolbegåvningar*) (SOU 1943:28) may suffer from a slow pace in teaching. His suggestion is to offer acceleration in two stages. Firstly, the student positively lexicalised as 'the preponderous (*föreslagna*), independent, individual type' (SOU 1943:19, 33) would be allowed to start a year earlier, which would apply to 25 percent of the student population. A second opportunity would be offered after the age of nine, which he claims could relate to another 8 percent of the age group. On the topic of identification, he argues the students in question would be found using school maturity tests in conjunction with a thorough medical and pedagogical examinations of the child's ability in relation to age. In contrast to Anderberg, Elmgren argues for special classes for gifted students, lexicalised as 'elite classes' which are "out of the question, or possibly limited to options in larger cities" (SOU 1943:19, 33). But he then continues using lexicalisations with more positive connotations:

Undoubtedly there is something particularly attractive about the idea of attempting to look after the gifted (*begåvade*) by adjusting educational conditions to their type. In modern times, our education system has experienced extensive specialisation and differentiation for the benefit of the mentally retarded, psychopathic, and so-called deviant children. This has been done without anywhere making any equivalent investments or efforts on the behalf of society according to the needs of the intellectually endowed. To a far too great extent it has been ignored that the intelligence distribution curve has a positive end which precisely counterbalances the negative end and requires similar pedagogical considerations (SOU 1943:19, 33).

What seems to be the case, therefore, is that Elmgren is indecisive concerning teaching strategies for gifted students.

*To conclude*, through the arguments presented by the four professors, it is possible to see just how different the arguments were relating to the ‘differentiation question’ at the same point in time. Anderberg based on Terman and Thorndike includes responsibilities for gifted students in the role of the teacher. Schematically, his contribution places the educational needs of gifted students at the centre of the ‘differentiation question’ as he argues in favour of their right to progress, by having access to stimulating education, individualised teaching and thriving competition. Furthermore, he argues against placing the responsibility on the student to drive their own development based on their interests, and he questions the relationship between intellectual ability and age of development as predetermined. Additionally, he offers a positively lexicalised categorisation of gifted students as fast learners who are intellectually better developed than the main student body. But they are also categorised as vulnerable and in need of ‘rehabilitation’ if not stimulated, and he describes how a lack of challenges in school may have a lasting negative effect on their lives. In contrast, Katz, in agreement with Freud and psychoanalysis, schematically places the emphasis on avoiding the creation of trauma by avoiding competition or putting too much pressure on the student in the phase of puberty. Landquist, in accordance with the pragmatists and Dewey, argues for the importance of learning in collaboration with others and in places other than school, but also links undifferentiated teaching to boredom. Elmgren, in agreement with Stern and Piaget, states that development is predetermined and that providing more complex learning tasks too early would be ineffective.

Even if the categorisation of gifted students varies between the four professors, collectively they relate differentiation to students who are fast learners at a high level of skill. In the paper intellectual abilities are referred to in the form of academic giftedness: for Anderberg lexicalised ‘the intellectually better developed’, ‘the bright lights’, and Elmgren’s references to the students ‘at the positive end of the bell curve’ and the ‘intellectually endowed’. These classical IQ-related definitions presuppose a view of intelligence as including a strong ability to reason at a high level of abstraction.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, there are references relating to vulnerability and a need for challenges to flourish. In combination, it could be interpreted as giftedness is categorised by referring to the following descriptors in the cluster model:

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<sup>36</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology* (2009) “Intelligence” relating to the definition by the referred sources.

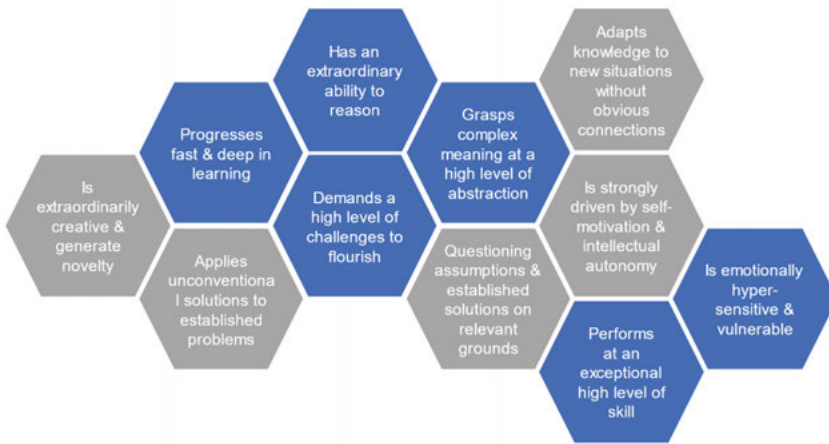


Figure 7:1 – Giftedness in SOU 1943:19

In comparison to the previous illustration, it means the categorisation of giftedness has again expanded from ‘the highly able’ and/or ‘fast learner’ to a more multi-faceted categorisation. Although, the expansion is largely due to the contribution by Anderberg. There are also contradictions between what the professors say, for example in the way Anderberg and Landquist argue for the gifted student as someone in need of challenges while Elmgren defines gifted education as ‘elitist’ and ‘out of the question’.

On the topic of organisational matters in the form of teaching strategies, three of the writers are in favour of early differentiation, while only one argues for the latter option. It could be concluded that the experts collectively argue for early differentiation, understood as taking place after four years of education at the age of ten. Interestingly, it is only Elmgren, arguing as he does for late differentiation and postponing more demanding elements of learning, who is selected by the relevant authorities to continue the reform work. As we saw in Chapter 2, an additional contribution of his is to refer the identification of ability to science by introducing the psychologist and mental testing in education, topics developed further by the following 1946 Commission.

## Introducing Pragmatism and the Psychological Gaze - the 1946 School Commission

At the same time as the work by the 1940's School Committee continued, the 1946 School Commission started its work on how to rid the education system of its' "onerous and outdated elements" (SOU 1948:27, 2). On the topic of differentiation, their report summarises where the debate had reached at that point, but also argues for different steps to be taken.

As mentioned in the historical background, in the 1940's 'democracy' became one of the key concepts in Swedish education, inspired by John Dewey and by pragmatism. By the '46 Commission, it is argued that educating students for life should be the goal of education. This contrasts with a view that the curriculum of the time was "too intellectualistic" (SOU 1948:27, 30) and too much in the old tradition of 'bildung' and scholarly learning. Since democracy should not only be a value to be taught but also something applied, the Commission emphasises the collective, in the form of cooperation and group work which they describe as "a natural form of life" (SOU 1948:27,4). Its impact is lexicalised in very optimistic terms:

The aim of cooperation is to create a sense of comradeship which respects everyone's ability, and in a spirit of helpfulness, include everyone in the collaboration. Leadership talent, the ability to organise, the will to cooperate, to sacrifice oneself to the success of the collective, skills in making the details blend into a whole, talents of intellectual, artistic, or practical type, will all be acknowledged in such work (SOU 1948:27, 35).

Nevertheless, it could be argued that democracy is based on an acceptance of diversity. This means that conformity and all forms of alignment in thinking, including the attribution to democracy itself, could be seen as contradictory. The committee seems to be aware of this dilemma as it mentions how democracy must not become a truth in its own right, and that it should never be the aim to "cast everyone from the same mould" (SOU 1948:27, 3)<sup>37</sup>. Therefore, the Commission argues that even if cooperation is at the core of education, all teaching should also be based on individuality and adjusted according to 'personal circumstances' (*förutsättningar*).

On the topic of teaching strategies, the Commission states that organisational differentiation should be replaced by pedagogical differentiation in the classroom. For example, individualisation should be found in different forms of acceleration. It is claimed that rather than using biological age as a point of reference, enrolment should be based on maturity tests which would mean some students would be identified as able to start earlier while others will be recommended to wait. The possibility for enrichment is also hinted at, since

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<sup>37</sup> The importance of diversity is something Dewey clarifies in his writing (Dewey 2017:83).

students positively lexicalised ‘with exceptional academic giftedness’ (*utmärkande studiebegåvning*) should have access to deeper, broader and “more qualified tasks than the others, and not be restrained by their slow pace” (SOU 1948:27, 9). Even so, there are also limitations to individualisation, for example in the use of ability grouping. In line with placing a strong emphasis on cooperation, the Commission states that under no circumstances should ‘the gifted’ (*de begåvade*) be made into a separate unit isolated from the rest. Since “out of the point of view of citizenship this would have an unfortunate impact: education is supposed to prepare for life, and in life cooperation between different categories must take place. The school must foster such cooperation” (SOU 1948:27, 71). Here lexicalisation and local meaning seem to give these ideas a kind of unconditional force present in the expressions ‘would have’ an unfortunate impact, and in the choice of the word ‘must’. In response to whether students of different ability would then be supported in the learning, the Commission states:

Studies have indicated that at different levels of intelligence there are children whose achievements are not in line with their intelligence, and that the number of such children is even higher at higher levels of mental capacity than at lower. Taking into consideration the teachers’ ambition to include even the intellectually weakest student, and with respect to a relative underperformance among the overly gifted (*de överbegåvade*) most often goes by unnoticed in school, such conditions are not worth remarking on. Thereby, individualised teaching and activity-based methods are enough to improve such situations. On the contrary, when the ability to keep up with learning is significantly below average; then specific measures are necessary (SOU 1948:27, 450).

In other words, what is argued in the quotation is that different categories of students exist in school, both those who are categorised as ‘overly gifted’ and those who are ‘below average’. It is acknowledged that students might be noticed for the extent of their abilities but at the same time, performance of those ‘at higher levels of mental capacity’ are left outside consideration since their underperformance is deemed irrelevant, or ‘not worth remarking on’.

On the topic of identification of ability, the Commission argues in favour of supporting the work of the teacher by introducing a new role in the school – the school psychologist. Lexicalisation here implies a scientific mode of thought: such a person would be responsible for identifying and monitoring the students’ physical and mental abilities, their development, as well as monitoring factors that might influence performance. The Commission argues that judgements by psychologists should be based on maturity tests and on other forms of psychological assessments, to help teachers see “the individual child’s dispositions and difficulties out of point of view of mental hygiene and

individual psychology” (SOU 1948:27, 456). Judging by the number of components included in educating such a person, their areas of expertise are thought to be vast.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, the Commission argues that the use of intelligence testing has generated a scientific instrument for ability assessment to be used for a variety of purposes. Together with teacher recommendations and school results, these tests “will give a reliable indication of potentiality to study” (SOU 1948:27, 69) because it allows results to be analysed statistically and performances to be compared to those of other students. In turn, such insights would be relevant, for example, in choosing what material to use in teaching, but also in deciding how to adjust knowledge requirements in individual courses according to level of maturity. On the topic of pastoral care, it is argued that tests could be included in actions taken in supporting the students since the education system has extended its responsibility for the student’s well-being. For example, tests could be used to identify students who should be directed to different forms of support classes. According to the recommendation, the scanning procedure could be based on a “quadripartite diagnosis” of students including social investigation, psychological examination, intelligence testing, and teacher assessment of behaviour and performance (SOU 1948:27, 446).

Table 7:1 Transformations in Education Policy; 1940’s

<b>Component</b>	<b>Pre 1940</b>	<b>1946 Commission</b>
Organisation	Double affiliation	Integrated
Value	Authoritarian, Christian	Democracy, cooperation, individualisation
Role of the Teacher	Disciplining	Caring, identifying
Pedagogy	Classical, intellectual ‘bildung’, memorizing, formalism	Useful, education for citizenship, self-managing, reflection
View of the Student	Obedient	Cooperative
Structure	Differentiated system	Differentiated teaching

*To summarise*, it is possible to interpret the 1940’s as something of a paradigm shift in the reform process intending to leave behind the negative conception of classical, authoritarian, memory-based education and replace it, positively, by a modern, relevant education “at the service of society” and founded on democratic principles (SOU 1948:27, 1). Inspired by pragmatism, the 1946

<sup>38</sup> These include a first degree in a combination of psychology and pedagogy, followed by a second degree including experimental psychology, test psychology, pedagogical statistics, school subject related psychology, personality and social psychology, psychiatry, paediatrics focused on physical illnesses and their connection to psychological disturbances, psychology of choice of profession, psycho-technology, Rorschach testing and psychotherapy (SOU 1948:27, 458).

Commission paper is organised schematically around a strong emphasis on democracy expressed through the importance of collaboration in teaching and learning. At the same time, one can detect a local meaning in the text which values diversity in the form of individualisation, which the Commission assumes will be recognised once integration has taken place.

In both Green Papers, it is possible to identify an underlying current of an increasing influence of science on education particularly how pedagogy ought to be guided by psychology. This impacts the role of the teacher since some of the responsibility for assessing student ability should be transferred to the school psychologist (see also the rendition of Lundahl's description in Chapter 2). The lexicalisation of development of ability as bound by biological laws makes it difficult to refute – without questioning the authority of such laws. In response to the topic of the 'differentiation question', it is argued that testing should become the core procedure of an education system based on a rational ground. A vast collection of components is suggested as being appropriate for such testing<sup>39</sup>.

## To Motivate Students and Avoid the Risk of Failing

### 1955

In the first curriculum texts published after the 1940's Green Papers it is possible to find connections to arguments presented by the two committees. These indicate further steps towards integration, while at the same time acknowledging difference in ability. For example, on the topic of categorisation, both systems recognise able students. In the Folk School curriculum (FSC)<sup>40</sup> from 1955 it is stated: "In a school for all, it has to be an ideal to strive for that each and every one gains support in developing what is in agreement with his abilities and possibilities, even if these are above or below the current course requirements" (FSC1955:18). On the topic of teaching strategies, while previous Folk School documents fail to mention acceleration as a possibility, the 1955 curriculum allows such a possibility in Folk School "in rare cases" (FSC 1955:24). In addition, once the students have fulfilled the basic course requirements, it is argued the students should be offered the possibility to work on enriching activities, and students who work at a faster pace should be offered 'additional exercises'. "For students who show the propensity to work more independently" (FSC1955:18) the suggestion is to offer 'exercises in silence' (*tysta övningar*).

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<sup>39</sup> The recognition of such methods is indicated in the Green Paper SOU 1960:13, produced by a later committee. The Paper is fully devoted to an exploration of how results from psychological testing can be used as a foundation in teaching.

<sup>40</sup> *Undervisningsplan för rikets folkskolor* (1955), my translation.

Another significant change is present in the topic addressing the role of the teacher. From having been categorised as a disciplining agent to become something of a guardian, the teacher in the 1955 curriculum should be acquainted with students “individual endowments, circumstances and interests” (FSC 1955:11). In a lexicalisation signalling an even more intimate relation it is argued that “In the teacher, the disciples ought to find a friend whom they can turn to for advice, not only concerning schoolwork, but also concerning other circumstances and problems” (FSC 1955:11). At the same time, in connection to the topic of teaching strategies the curriculum continues to argue for the need to adjust subject content by making it “less burdensome” (FSC 1955:7). Here a new argument appears that any form of teacher feedback should emphasise only what is positive, since it is claimed that nothing is as demotivating as a sense of failing. In particular, it is argued encouragement by the teacher should be given to students categorised as struggling, and to students lexicalised as “the intellectually weakly equipped” (FSC 1955:11).

In terms of localised meaning, the assumption is that “encouragement” and “kind words will increase [students’] trust in themselves and thereby their ability to perform” (FSC 1955:11). In this regard, mathematics is presupposed to be a particularly delicate subject where “it is of importance that the teacher recognises in what areas the student may struggle, and on instruction allows plenty of time, and provides a concise and simple presentation” (FSC 1955:8). A similar thought is expressed also in the study of Swedish where schematically, the emphasis of the argument is placed on adjusting expectation according to the students’ level of development. Exercises must not reach beyond what “the maturity level of the students enable them to do” placing the responsibility of the teacher to not move beyond “the development process of the majority of the students” (FSC 1955:69) and to remember that the “ability for abstract thinking is profoundly reduced before puberty” (FSC 1955:73). In addition to establishing a close relationship to the students, and to encourage them, the teacher should also consider to what extent ‘he himself’ [sic!] may be the reason behind a student’s negative behaviour. In contrast, schematically what is left out of the argument is any mention of the teacher’s responsibility to challenge the students, to support them in how to develop stamina, or to deal with difficulties and a sense of failing. Instead, it is concluded it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure such emotions do not occur.

At the same time, on the topic of teaching strategies mathematics is also characterised as a subject where high ability may make itself known. To individualise according to ability is found in that increasingly demanding exercises “can be given to the conscientious (*duktiga*) students” while allowing “more time for the weaker students to spend on the more elementary parts of the course” (FSC1955:18). A second suggestion is how ‘the more precocious’ (*de mer försigkomna*) can support the teacher in helping other students. A third solution is to allow the faster students to study together with older students. In addition, it is argued that “if possible, occasionally students with particularly

strong ability in mathematics ought to be given the opportunity to go beyond course requirements, on their own, but according to the teacher's instructions" (FSC1955:18-19).

In relation to the topic of categorisation, one of the key learning objectives in the Folk School curriculum from 1955 is to develop critical thinking as "a powerful antidote against deceptive propaganda" (FSC 1955:6-7). Moreover, education is defined to be about personal development, independence, and a widening of horizons. In comparison to a former emphasis on socialisation these objectives indicate a change in the way Folk School students are categorised, as it assumes students to be capable of making more complex evaluations. However, when addressing subjects requiring skills rather than theoretical knowledge, the old categorisation of Folk School students as first and foremost practically able returns. For example, in relation to music, craft and drawing it is stated: "the need for a more extensive individualisation is fairly obvious: some students will have the time to reach further depending on difference in intelligence" (FSC1955:18). The only explicit mentioning of getting the students used to working at a fast pace is also in Crafts where they should get used to being "careful, but brisk and nimble" (FSC1955:143).

## 1958

Regarding the topic of teaching strategies, in the equivalent Grammar School curriculum from (1958)<sup>41</sup> most subject content is described in a general manner, as are the instructions for teaching strategies and methods. However, an exception to this is found in two subjects. In an attempt to make teaching of Swedish more relevant and adjusted to the level of development of the students, grammar teaching should be postponed or omitted altogether. Grammar is lexicalised as "time consuming" and "taught at a far too young age before the ability to think abstractly has developed" (GSC 1958:57). Similarly, teachers should not spend too much time making corrections because students do not have the ability to make sense of them, thus avoiding the creation of "inhibiting conditions" (GSC1958:58). In effect, spelling exercises are perceived as either "superfluous" for 'the high-performing students' and for 'the particularly weak students' "the number of errors increase their sense of inadequacy and reduce their self-esteem, which is a condition for achieving a good result" (GSC1958:76). Instead, it is assumed, proficiency will develop of its own accord, at least among the majority of students.

In a similar manner, the Grammar school syllabus for mathematics schematically emphasises that the course must not be too demanding: teaching must be focused according to "the point-of-view of common development" and be as concrete and clear as possible (GSC1958:114). At the same time the document states: "the demand for clarity must not mean the teacher persists in focusing on what the disciple has already understood [...] one is then at a risk

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<sup>41</sup> *Kursplaner och metodiska anvisningar för realskolan 1958*, my translation.

of the disciples getting bored and inattentive” (GSC 1958:114). However, since “the main part of a lesson is devoted to the average and the weak students” (GSC 1958:114) and to “those who have returned to school after shorter or longer periods of absence” (GSC 1958:115) two suggestions are made regarding the issue of individualised teaching. The first is to allow the gifted students (*begåvade*) to work ahead of class while the teacher “on the black board keeps to a pace suitable for the less able” (GSC 1958:115). Secondly, for students categorised as “particularly interested and conscientious” (*duktiga*), individual assignments and homework can be offered. Contrary to the categorisation of gifted students as fast learners, when a new mathematical method is introduced, it is argued students should be given a large number of similar exercises to work on, in class as well as at home. Since such work can become quite tedious, the suggestion is to distribute the exercises over a longer period of time. For variation, the students are asked to revise previous sections of the course to guarantee these are well-established in their minds. Progression, on the other hand, should take place at a slow pace “to keep the interest of the students intact” (GSC 1958:116). It is argued:

Steps that are too extensive and exercises that are too difficult should be avoided since they can result in failure, even for the not untalented disciples, and thus are not in line with the intention of teaching. To fail in mathematics is actually of more significance than in most other subjects and accordingly, may generate a sense of dejection and fear, which in turn may inhibit the ability to perform, in particular at an earlier stage of education. Therefore, teaching ought to be kept at a level where no student seems to be confronted by unattainable challenges (GSC1958:116).

Again, the argument is coloured by the negative lexicalisation emphasising ‘failure’, ‘difficulty’ and ‘unattainable challenges’. Similar examples are found also in other parts of the text reflecting the thoughts of Piaget, Elmgren and Katz and worded in a similar way. The document continues by claiming that what may appear as “abstract and demanding” is “the greatest danger” (GSC 1958:118), emphasizing the importance to avoid a “sensation of stress” (GSC 1958:127) and not leave a section of the course before being certain that “all students can master it” (GSC 1958:118).

*To summarise*, in the documents from the 1950’s, alterations are found both in the topic of the role of the teacher and the categorisation of students. With arguments schematically emphasising aspects of the teacher-student relation, students are indirectly categorised as sensitive and it is the responsibility of the teacher to encourage, but also to protect. The latter is interpreted as avoiding challenging learning episodes and instead focusing on encouragement which it is hoped will enhance motivation and strong performance. At the same time, a need to differentiate – or individualise teaching - is maintained as evidenced by mentions of students of different ability, including the gifted. However, the recurring suggestion in the documents is that teachers should

focus on the slower end of the ability span, while students at the other end are largely left to work on their own, either in silence in the classroom, or as homework.

What does this mean in the cluster model? As in the previous period fast pace and high performance are mentioned. However, there is a strong new emphasis on working independently, implying self-motivation, which results in the following descriptors interpreted as present:

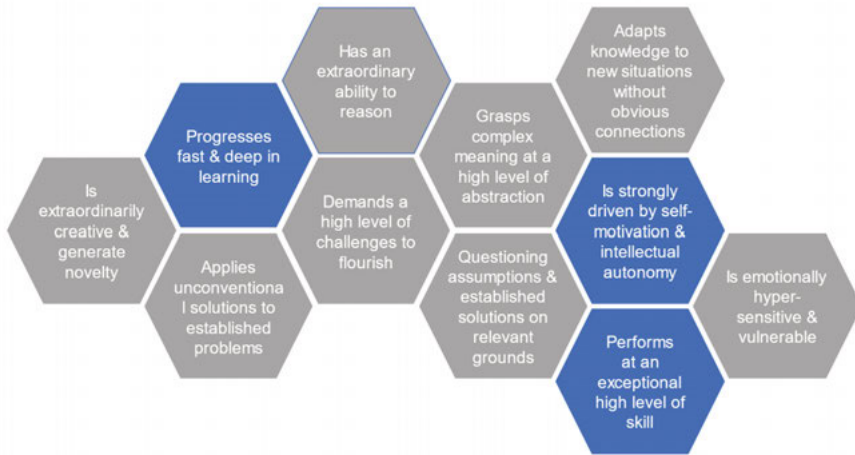


Figure 7:2 Giftedness in School Policy 1955/58

## Emphasis on Relational Aspects

### 1962

The next selection of policy documents from 1962 are the first for the integrated school system and can be seen as one of the final stages of the integration process. The changes in these documents have important implications in terms of the topic of organisational differentiation. In the integrated school system, eight out of a total of nine years of elementary school were studied in common, while the last year differentiated the students depending on whether their aim was to continue to study at upper secondary level, or to transfer towards a profession. At a structural level, courses were divided in a standard course and an advanced course – a form of enrichment containing material additional to the regular syllabus. As suggested by the 1940’s committees, students were offered the possibility of starting a year early, or a year late depending on the results of maturity tests.

On the topic of teaching strategies, more specifically, the elementary school curriculum from 1962 (Lgr 62) continues to argue for individualisation. Schematically, there is an emphasis on the importance of addressing students as individuals with different “temperament, different types of “endowment”, working pace and social attitudes” (SFS1962:480,32). Individualisation is significant since “classes that are one-sided and adjusted according to an “average level” always generate significant disadvantages and dissatisfying results, both in terms of the weakest and the high-ability students” (SFS1962:480,51), which means both categories of students are mentioned.

The curriculum shows other traces of the ‘psychologistic’ influences from the ’46 Commission in addition to the embrace of maturity testing. These are found in the topic of the role of the teacher, specifically in the teacher-student relation. It is argued that teachers should not focus only on students’ intellectual development since education should satisfy also the students’ physical, emotional, and social needs. Therefore, “in creating psychologically just conditions within the walls of the school” it is concluded that it is a responsibility of the teacher to be aware of “the most common reasons for deviant behaviour and to be able to prevent and eliminate the occurrence of difficulties” (SFS1962:480, 1310.) Recurring lexicalisations relating to care reinforce this shift in the text. For example, there are a number of references to the importance of students experiencing positive sensations of ‘safety’ and ‘enjoyment’ (*trygghet och trivsel*) and that “[A] concern for the students’ mental and physical well-being shall signify both the working tasks they are given and working environment of the school” (SFS1962:480, 1310). What is more, the teacher should “help” the students to find their way in society, and “by the help of education nourish their abilities and possibilities” (SFS1962:480, 1306). Accordingly, the role of the teacher is described as a confidante, someone the parents can turn to, someone “to trust” and someone to build a relationship to “through private and personal conversations” (SFS 1962:480, 25).

Despite teachers not being bound by the same level of confidentiality as members of the medical and similar professions, it is argued that teachers should think of their professional commitment in similar terms. The topic of pastoral care structures highlights the significance of such a responsibility. In the 1962 reform, these expand further to include teachers, the headmaster, the school psychologist, the school doctor, the school nurse, the student counselor, the guardians, and a new role found in the student careers advisor.

One way the emphasis on care could be understood is that it shifts the centre of gravity of educational provision towards preconditions for learning, rather than learning itself. Similar arguments, also in line with the ’46 Commission, can be found in a request for an analytical approach to monitoring the students, based on a scientific-medical type of lexicalisation. For example, it is claimed that the role of the teacher is not just to identify misbehaving students but also to try to understand them, and to find the reasons behind their unwanted behaviour. To be able to do so, the teacher should ‘observe’ the students by using

the same examination techniques as in psychological and social investigations. The students should also be ‘observed’ in class, and all information about them should be collected on a card, like that of a medical journal. There are also arguments supporting the use of diagnostic tests and maturity tests and to make use of ‘socio-metric questions’, in particular as part of special education referred to “when somebody significantly deviates in terms of adjustment” (SFS1962:480, 97). The lexicalisation here supports a general shift to negative experiences in the form of ‘school difficulties’ and presumes that these can depend on several factors. For example, “boredom and dissatisfaction” are traced to a teacher’s inability to build a strong relationship to the students (SFS1962:480, 32).

Left out of the argument, on the other hand are claims similar to those by professor Anderberg and Landquist connecting disruption to boredom and understimulation. Instead, the 1962 curriculum takes the opposite line by making a connection between disruptive behaviour and education that is deemed too difficult and demands too much of the students. It is assumed that students may try to disguise difficulties behind negative behaviours found in “obstructive attitudes” and “arrogance” (SFS 1962:480, 83). Too high demands may create “a sense of being uncompliant, of being a failure and beyond appreciation” (SFS1962:480, 84). Therefore, it is concluded the solution is to lower the demands.

On the topic of categorisation an interesting change takes place. Students described by the cluster model attributes from the 1962 documents or replaced by more general descriptions. For example, on the topic of teaching strategies for the advanced course, instead of referring to ability as found in equivalent passages in previous text examples, it is stated that adjustments should be made according to the students’ “condition for studying” (*studieförutsättningar*) (SFS 1962:480,39). Schematically, such a wide concept could refer to a variety of factors, such as socio-economic conditions, personal circumstances, or ability, but within the context it is left open without further clarification. A similar change is found in enrichment in the form of ‘Independent Projects’. In the former text from 1955, these projects were specifically aimed at stimulating gifted students and, as such, included in the teacher’s official teaching duties. In the 1962 statute, the possibility of running such projects remains, but without being related to gifted students. Instead, the document again leaves it open by claiming that “*a student* can maintain individual work in a subject” (SFS 1962:439, Ch10:10, my italicization). Furthermore, rather than using the standard and advanced level courses as a method for supporting different abilities, the 1962 curriculum suggests that students should be kept motivated by allowing them to choose their courses freely. The document makes very clear that these choices should be honoured: “even if the choice goes against their intellectual abilities as those are perceived by the school. This means there shall be no limitations in access to electives or lines of education” (SFS 1962:480,35).

In term of localised meanings, these examples highlight a move in the document from specific categorisations to general categories in which giftedness can be implied but is no longer explicitly mentioned. Instead of referring to the categories of the gifted and non-gifted, the passage is organised in such a way it leaves out such references and concentrates instead on the lexicalisations of ‘weak’ performance implying lower ability. A similar example is found again in the syllabus for mathematics. While it does recognise students in the category of high ability, the focus is elsewhere. It is stated:

For a few students, the development from being able to find a solution with the help of concrete material and everyday language, to thinking in symbols and mathematical terminology happens rather quickly. For the majority of students, this process takes a long time. If the latter are forced to proceed too soon to the use of a symbolic language, such as the use of numbers and algorithms or later on, algebraic language, their thought processes used in solving mathematical problems will rely on unsolid grounds (SFS 1962:480, 170).

In the document, the argumentation ends there. Therefore, it could be argued the impact of making such adjustments is only looked upon from one side, meaning schematically placing an emphasis on those who are lexicalised as slow and belonging to the majority while the ‘few students’ who learn ‘rather quickly’ are left without further mentioning.

## 1968

The equivalent document for upper secondary school from 1968<sup>42</sup> includes several parallel, even identical, sections to the 1962 elementary school document. Yet again, something like giftedness only makes an appearance in the section of mathematics teaching; it is where “students with a particular aptitude and interest” (Lgy 67:279) can be offered to do more demanding projects in the form of an Extended Assignment (*specialarbete*)<sup>43</sup>. As in the previous document expectations here are downplayed: “Later on, only a few of the students will devote themselves to Mathematics as a form of science. For most students mathematics will be an instrument essential for further studies or employment. The teaching of mathematics must be organised using that as a point of reference” (Lgy 67:258).

## Conclusions

In this middle period, the structure of the education system changes from two parallel systems to one integrated system. From 1962 the same content is offered to all students attending elementary school, apart from some electives,

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<sup>42</sup> *Läroplan för gymnasiet* (1967), my translation.

<sup>43</sup> An in-depth study of an area of interest resulting in a written report.

such as the choice of modern language. In agreement with the 1946 Commission, the focus of the ‘differentiation question’ therefore is transferred from the organisationally differentiated system to pedagogically differentiated teaching. Along with these changes, expectations regarding student ability changes from being associated with two separate categories, represented by students on either side of the educational divide, to a single common category.

Still, in the documents an increasing proportion of the teacher’s attention is focused either on the ‘student in general’ or the ‘student below average’. In the few instances when the ‘above average student’ is mentioned, the student is categorised as highly able or as a fast learner who is allowed to work ahead of the class and to go deeper in learning. In the 1968 document there are additional references to abstract thinking in mathematics. In the cluster model this results in a narrowing of focus, matching the period before the investigation by the four professors, as visualised in the following illustration:

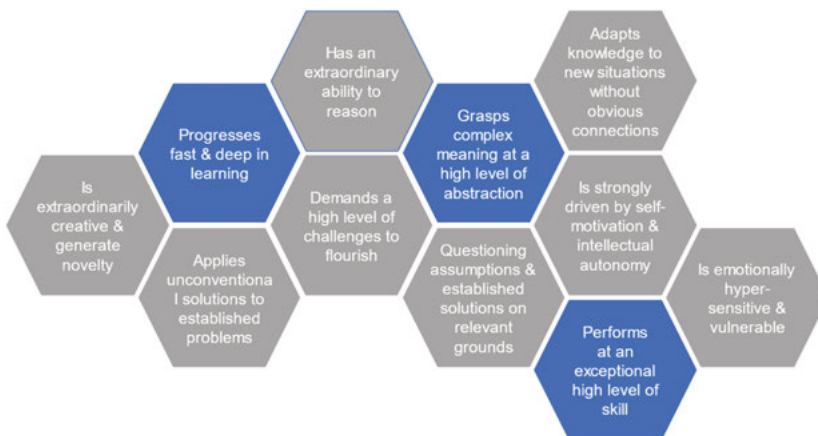


Figure 7.3 Giftedness in School Policy 1962/68

During this period, a developing connection between the teacher and the psychologist is documented. This is evidenced both by the application of testing in schools and by actions of the teacher through record keeping and in observing students in order to understand the causes of disruptive behaviour. Identification of students’ needs becomes important in this period facilitated by the introduction of maturity and IQ testing. Such procedures are absent in previous documents, but from the 1940’s and onwards to identify students becomes essential in individualising and adjusting teaching strategies.

The provisions of the 1946 Commission paper suggest that students of high ability would not be lost in a system common for all, as it would depend on differentiated teaching instead of differentiating students. Along these lines,

throughout the whole middle period, acceleration and a variety of enrichment alternatives are available as teaching strategies. However, it is possible to trace the trajectory of these strategies in more than one way. The first observation is how organisational structures and teaching strategies from the beginning intended to support gifted students in their learning, continue to be mentioned in the documents, but less explicitly so in relation to such students. The second observation is how the term ‘differentiation’ which directly connote adjustments according to ability, is further replaced by the more general term ‘individualisation’. Above all, by the use of emotionally coloured lexicalisation, and a schematic organisation emphasising the student as someone in need of help, together assume that there is an incompatibility between providing challenging content to motivate the more able students and keeping the majority of students motivated by avoiding challenges. As we will see, this tension will continue to play a role in the next period of the analysis.

## Chapter 8: High Performance and Special Education - 1969 to 2022

In this chapter, the analysis covers policy documents published after the integration of the Grammar School and the Folk School systems. It stretches from 1969, via the reform in 1994, to the latest reform in 2011 revised in 2022.

As described in Chapter 2 on context and historical background, after integration the focus of the development of the ‘differentiation question’ turned to disciplinary issues and reasons behind disturbances in school. It was argued that to make space for more diverse types of students in ‘a school for all’, education had to be based on compensatory actions, including a redistribution of resources to those in need of support (Lindensjö & Lundgren, 2006). These arguments are particularly visible in the first set of documents from 1969.

### Individualisation for ‘The Student in Difficulties’

#### 1969

In the 1969 curriculum for elementary school (Lgr 69)<sup>44</sup> it is possible to trace the development of several features present in the preceding texts. In some cases, some of these topics and arguments receive greater prominence in the later document. For example, the curricula continue to be schematically organised with an emphasis on teaching strategies based on democratic values. The teacher is to apply methods founded on cooperation and participation and group work continues to be considered a highly important strategy.

On the topic of organisation, the courses in the curriculum are divided in a standard level course (*grundkurs*) and an advanced level course (*överkurs*) but there is no mention of the difference in content or methods. Instead, levels are chosen with emphasis on limitation: “in choice of content, it is important that the teacher takes into consideration limitations generated by the students’ conditions for studying” (Lgr 69:45). The advanced course is to function as a complement to the standard course to provide more depth to the subject in question, from which it could be inferred that it is directed to more advanced students. Nevertheless, schematically there is no explicit reference to this category of students in the description of the advanced level. On the contrary:

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<sup>44</sup> *Läroplan för grundskolan* (1969), my translation.

“one has to be prepared for the weaker students’ conditions to manage advanced work differ entirely between subjects” (Lgr 69:45). The lexicalisation and organisation emphasise ‘weaker students’, and ‘manage’ and ‘limitations’ imply that the correct strategy is to limit expectations.

In relation to teaching strategies, two topics continue to be schematically emphasised – individualisation and pastoral care. Both are given their own sections within the curriculum text. Where difference of ability makes its most explicit appearance in the section on individualisation. The argument is introduced by a list of ways in which students may differ. These include differences in physical qualities, intelligence, interests, social qualities, and technical, manual, or artistic talent. It is argued, therefore, that students should be allowed the possibility to work at their own “natural” pace in agreement with: “their personality, study conditions (*studieförutsättningar*), interests, aptitude, level of maturity, and physical development” (Lgr 69:56). Furthermore, it is claimed that since motivation depends on interests, it is important that subject content is adjusted to the students’ interest, for example activities they do in their spare time. In contrast, what schematically is left out of the argument is any mentioning of in what way adjustments of this kind also include teaching the students beyond what is lexicalised as their “natural” way of being and their already found interests.

In the 1969 document, the section on individualised teaching is followed by a strong emphasis on the topic of pastoral care, particularly strategies to deal with what is lexicalised as ‘school difficulties’. In the text, the topic is expanded and now possesses its own chapter plus a passage on special education. ‘Care’, ‘help’ and ‘support’ are the significant lexicalisations here. For example, “every student should have a sense of belonging to the school community, to count on their support and to be a subject of their care” (Lgr 69:17). Further support is given to the argument that difficulties can arise if the teacher demands too much of the students. For example, it is claimed:

The reasons why students may find it difficult to adjust in school can be many: subject content and methods that go beyond their intellectual capacity, that fail to catch their attention, specific difficulties in reading or writing, social or emotional deviances, temporary or more long-term physical illnesses, or consequences of such. Difficulties may also occur if the teacher demands too much in terms of order or performance, or in one way or another creates tension, for example by the way he acts or in his attitude towards the students (Lgr 69:91).

In this passage the lexicalisation used to describe these conditions predominantly emphasises the negative consequences of demanding ‘too much’: ‘difficult’, ‘fail’, ‘deviance’ and ‘create tension’.

This line of argument is developed further when it is claimed that by demanding too much, the school might worsen the well-being of the student. The

general premise of this argument is that a person's response in different situations depends on a combination of "constitutional and environmental factors" (Lgr 69:91). However, instead of providing a more diverse description of what these factors might be, the sentence following refers only to inhibiting factors. In turn this is followed by six pages which offer a detailed categorisations of a number of different types of students, and their shortcomings. For example, 'students lacking in intellectual capacity' who, it is claimed, may hide behind an arrogant attitude, or indulge in antisocial behaviour, and 'lively, agile students' who "if the demands on order increase [...] will end up in a state of tension and their school performance will deteriorate" (Lgr 69:91). Furthermore, school difficulties may be caused by "a misunderstanding of what it is possible to demand of children at different stages in their development and can lead to a sense of inability to comply, of being a failure, and as a consequence being beyond appreciation" (Lgr 69:91). The document claims that, in these situations, students may either turn out as shy, anxious, and physically or intellectually inhibited, or as 'over-ambitious' and develop depressions if confronted by setbacks.

This list of negatively lexicalised difficulties is long and includes attention-seeking strategies, concentration deficits, fidgetiness, aggression, alienation, shoplifting, fabrication and lying, truancy, sexual liaisons, and drug and alcohol abuse. The number of difficulties, in combination with the severity of their consequences, makes them difficult to ignore. The conclusion presented, therefore, is that the teacher must "handle [the students] with care" (Lgr 69:92) and that the pastoral team should be involved in investigating and monitoring the students' well-being. Schematically, nothing is mentioned regarding the other side of the argument, either in terms of any positive effects of placing demands on students, or of negative effects when not challenging them.

On the topic of identification, the scientific voice of the 1946 document can still be detected in the schematic organisation of the arguments emphasising the importance of extending the use of quantitative analysis methods in connection to teaching. These methods have been mentioned previously in the form of maturity tests, for example. In the 1969 curriculum, it is argued that it is easier to determine student performance if supported by diagnostic tests. A student in difficulties should be met by multiple responses including intelligence testing, tests for disabilities in reading and writing, and in severe cases by being referred to the paediatric psychology unit in the general health care system. School doctors and school nurses are also included in the apparatus of investigation in order to monitor physical or medical deficiencies that may have an impact on student performance. Students in need of more of a systematic monitoring are lexicalised as "students under control" (Lgr 69:96).

*To summarise*, the document from 1969 either employ the general category of students which is neutral with respect to ability, or specific categories which refer to students in difficulties. Examples of the general include 'studie-

förutsättningar' (*study conditions, or study circumstances*) which becomes increasingly common in the documents, and the categories of 'interested' students or 'conscientious' students (*duktiga*). Student motivation is argued to depend on how interesting they find their studies, which in turn is connected to studies that are not too demanding. In terms of teaching strategies, individualisation, it seems, has moved from meeting the needs of students of a variety of abilities to become more a way of adjusting teaching to those experiencing school difficulties. In these respects, Lgr 69 generates more categories than in any other document in the analysis. The extensive use of negative lexicalisations in the 1969 curriculum represents a significant shift in the way students are categorised, portraying the student as someone who is potentially vulnerable and emphasising the role of the teachers, together with other experts, responsible for their treatment.

## Further Integration

### 1980

In 1985, the first Education Act (1985:1100) for the integrated school system went through its first revision. The new version was then in use for 25 years and includes more than a hundred changes from its first to its last version. However, in terms of the topics that interest us here, there are no changes from the structures in the Act from 1962. For this reason, we leave the document without further comment.

The elementary school curriculum from the same time (Lgr 80)<sup>45</sup> also contains a great deal of content similar to previous curricula. For example, on the topic of teaching strategies, the need to 'individualise' and to adjust content according to the students' interests and needs continues to be presented as a principle of significance. Schematically, group work and collaboration continue to be emphasised: "to gain a good result, everyone is in need of support by everyone else in the class, or the group" (Lgr 80:50). Consequently, ability grouping is seen to be in opposition to collaborative structures. More specifically gathering the students categorised as in great need of help, "emotional support and encouragement", in a separate group is negatively lexicalised as "a risk" (Lgr 80:46). In support of the claim, it is stated "If such a group becomes permanent during any longer period of time it may affect the students' self-esteem. A group of this type easily leads to expectations being lowered, which results in students, despite intentions to the contrary, gaining lower results than in mixed groups" (Lgr 80:46). A schematic contrast here is what is omitted from the argument, such as any positive effects ability grouping may have, or how mixed groups may affect other students than the ones categorised as 'in need of a great deal of help'.

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<sup>45</sup> *Läroplan för grundskolan* (1980), my translation.

## 1994

The emphasis on keeping students together continues to be a topic of significance in the next reform of the curriculum in 1994.<sup>46</sup> As mentioned in the historical background, this is the point where education moves from being centrally regulated by the state to become the responsibility of local council committees and teachers at the individual schools. In effect, the curriculum for elementary and upper secondary school changes from separate documents each of approximately 150 pages or more, to a miniscule joint document of 35 pages. For the sake of the analysis, these extracts include general principles behind teaching, school organisation and the role of the teacher but provide no specific details on the topics in focus. At the same time, other structural changes were made in the '94 reform which are of relevance.

A new topic in this reform concerns a change in the definition of knowledge in the curriculum. The aim has been to go beyond factual knowledge and the development of basic skills. The Curriculum Committee behind the '94 reform applies a model presented in Bloom's taxonomy (*A Taxonomy for Learning*, 2001) by adding understanding, analysis, and application of knowledge (Lpo94:8, Lpf94:24). The Committee also takes a clear stand against a reliance on developmental theories by Piaget, which according to the Committee "in an unfortunate way has become a model for learning in schools" (SOU 1992:94, 38). Instead, theories by Vygotsky are introduced by the Committee, as a basic understanding of learning, including his concept of the zone of proximal development.

Contributing further to the changes are revisions of the grading system. The 1960 reform introduced a relative system for grading based on the normal distribution curve on a scale 1 to 5. In practice it meant most students would receive the average grade 3 while only 7 per cent of the students would receive either a bottom 1 or a top grade 5. In the '94 curriculum this system is replaced by a criterion-based system without limitations for a certain grade level. Of particular relevance for the assessment of top performance, possibly including gifted students, is that from the beginning, the suggestion according to SOU 1992:86, 11 was to use a scale including:

Failed (*ännu icke godkänd and icke godkänd*),  
Passed (*godkänd*),  
Well Passed (*väl godkänd*),  
Very Well Passed (*mycket väl godkänd*),  
Eminent (*framstående*),  
Excellent (*utmärkt*)

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<sup>46</sup> 1994 års läroplan för de frivilliga skolformerna, my translation.

However, once the system was set in practice, the two top levels were never realised in the curriculum and hence lexically removed the possibility of acknowledging eminent or excellent performance. In addition, for the first six years no criteria were published for the top grade (SNAE 2001:20). A third factor was that until the '94 reform, to certify that the standard of grading was kept consistent, teachers had to motivate any results deviating from the normal distribution in an especially appointed grade assembly meeting (SOU 1992:86). In '94 these methods of control and standardisation were removed meaning grading was left to local interpretation.

*In summary*, in comparison to the preceding documents from 1969, the omission of specific details of the syllabus means that the '94 curriculum also leaves out any negatively lexicalised difficulties and student categorisations. Schematically, there is therefore also no emphasis on how to identify and monitor students. In terms of local meaning, together these changes imply a curriculum emphasising possibilities rather than difficulties, and a change in the role of the teacher from realiser of policy to formulator of policy. The redefinition of knowledge, the changes in grading system, the unlimited grade distribution, in combination with a lack of criteria for the full range of grades made it difficult for teachers to produce consistent grades also at the top end. These difficulties are suggested by rampant grade inflation, where between 1997, when the system was first used to grade final year students, and 2007, the number of upper secondary students receiving top grade in all subjects increased by 170 percent (Henrekson & Vlachos 2009, Sims 2012).

## The 'Student Beyond Passing'

### 2011

The reform following from 2011 is the last in this 200-year exposé. Despite the aim of producing a curriculum open to possibilities, some of the integrative steps and open suggestions were reversed as the documents returned to more regulated principles and guidance<sup>47</sup>. This can be seen in a return to a more definite distinction between vocational programmes and pre-university programmes by making studies qualifying for university entrance optional for students at vocational programmes. At the same time, SNAE (2011) emphasises that "specialising too soon can make it difficult for the students to decide what to study" (SNAE 2011:39). Later specialisation is also motivated by the requirement of allowing students to change lines of education without having to start from the beginning. Again, the motivation behind the argument schematically emphasises what is negative, found in the lexicalisation of 'difficult'

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<sup>47</sup> For example, the grading criteria changed again, this time to the European A-F scale. However, claims have been made the problem of inflation still remains (Edmark & Persson, 2022, Hedman 2022).

to choose, while left out of the argument are any possible counterclaims in favour of an earlier specialisation.

On the topic of categorisation, the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) employs two categorisations of students relating to ability: ‘all students’ or ‘students in need’. The pastoral team continues to be mentioned in connection with the latter as significant in providing what is lexicalised as “medical, psychological, psychosocial and special pedagogical support” (SFS 2010:800 Ch.2:25§). Schematically, identifying difficulties is emphasised as something that should be done as early as possible. As in previous texts, identifying students is only mentioned if there are “indications of the students not being able to reach the knowledge requirements” (SFS 2010:800 Ch3:4§). There is no identification of the full range of students’ performance. However, Chapter 3 paragraph 3 of the Education Act presents an interesting new line of thought:

All children and students shall be given the guidance and stimulation they need in their learning and in their personal development to enable them to develop as far as possible in line with the educational aims and objectives. Students who due to limitations in their abilities have difficulties in satisfying all knowledge requirements should be given support, with the aim of eliminating consequences of these disabilities as far as possible. Students who easily passes the minimal knowledge requirements shall be given guidance and stimulation to reach further in their knowledge development (SFS 2010:800, Ch3§3).

In the Government Bill 2009/10:165 the following explanation is given of the section:

Students who easily passes the minimal knowledge requirements shall be given guidance and stimulation to reach further in their knowledge development. In *The Education Act* from 1985, there is no equivalent section [...] Naturally, the regulation means the local Head of Education cannot be satisfied by a student reaching the lowest level of acceptable results in terms of knowledge requirements. The aim is to mark that the ambition needs to be higher than that. In particular, the second sentence marks that available resources are not just to be directed towards the weakest students, but in addition that students who find it easier to reach the educational goals are entitled to guidance and stimulation to develop as far as possible (Government Bill 2009/10:165, 662).

This means the birth of a new category in ‘students who easily passes the minimal knowledge requirements’. This is taken further in the bill through a plural lexicalisation: ‘educational goals’ implying an expectation not just in terms of a single goal of ‘minimal’ requirements. Schematically, there are limits to this innovative line of thought since there is no mention in the actual act of students who easily passes a standard that is higher than the minimal knowledge requirements. The situation is made more complex through the further statement in the act that all students should be able to develop as far as possible: “an aim

should be to *uppväga* differences in children's and students' ability to incorporate education" (SFS 2010:800 1Ch.4§). Synonyms to the word 'uppväga', as found in *Strömbergs Synonymordbok* (1991), translates as: 'to compensate', but also 'to balance', 'to even out', 'neutralise' or 'disguise'. Such an aim seems to presuppose averaging performance towards the middle, instead of making all students develop according to their highest possible ability, an argument which seems to contradict the idea behind the categorisation in the bill. Seen together, these two foci make it unclear in the document how far the responsibility of the teacher stretches in supporting the students. On the one hand students should be allowed to develop further independently of others, but on the other, differences should be 'evened out'.

Turning to the topic of role of the teacher, in 2019 new identification material was introduced by SNAE (2019a, 2019b) obligatory to be applied to all students in the first year in school – the pre-school class (SFS 2011, 8 Ch. 2§). The material is intended to be used to identify students at risk of failing, and to guarantee that these students receive support as early as possible. The handbook of instructions mentions the identification of students categorised as "in need of more challenges to reach as far as possible" (SNAE 2019b:567,1). Yet, with the exception of a few bullet-points, the existence of such students is then left out of the argument. These points acknowledge the existence of such students but schematically leave out any more specific details on what actions are to be taken if such students are identified. Instead, the text only emphasises procedures and actions to be taken in supporting students lexicalised as 'at risk of falling behind in their learning', which again limits what categories of students are in focus of teaching (SNAE 2019b:567, 2019a:568).

On the topic of teaching strategies, the 2011 curricula continue to be open to the possibility of implementing different forms of acceleration and enrichment activities (SFS 2010:800 Ch.711§, SFS 2011:2039, Lgr11 2:2). However, no connection is made between the strategies and students of high ability. In addition, as part of any upper secondary school study (Lgy 11), all students should write an Independent Study report (*projektarbete*) in accordance with the profile of the programme. Schematically stronger performances are yet again left without further acknowledgment since grading only distinguishes between a pass and a fail. Concerning ability grouping, the Education Act 2010 states that "tests and assessments are not allowed to be used as conditions for group selection or within a school unit" (SFS 2010:800, Ch.9:6§). In terms of the local meaning of van Dijk, this implies not just a recommendation against ability grouping, but that such procedures should be discarded. Therefore, it is possible to detect an even more pronounced change over these documents in terms of what it means to group students: from a pedagogical tool involved in differentiated teaching and a way to make individual adjustments, to become something to avoid.

2022

The introductory section of the latest curricula presents the core values of the contemporary education system. In keeping with former documents these values are recognised in democracy, freedom of choice, diversity, and participation. On the topic of teaching strategies, as with the documents before the word ‘ability’ is replaced by the more general circumstances (*förutsättningar*). For example, in relation to diversity and learning, it is stated how “education should be adjusted to every student’s circumstances (*förutsättningar*) and needs. However, it claims also how students should be enabled to “develop the full extent of their ability, to experience knowledge as meaningful and progression in their knowledge development” (Lgr22:14, Lgy 22:7).

As in the former documents the overall address in the documents does not relate to any specific category of students but is written more generally. The exception is yet again when it concerns “to stimulate, supervise and make additional adjustments to students in difficulties” (Lgr22:14). For example, concerning when students move between stages of education, it is recommended to collaborate for “continuity and progression of students development and learning” where “special attention is given to students in need of additional adjustments or additional support” (Lgr 22 16-17).

In terms of student categorisation, both Lgr 22 and Lgy 22 present content in general that emphasises an expectation on a combination of knowledge and skills, practical as well as analytical. The grading criteria follow a general structure indicating progression supported by adjectives going from partial knowledge (E) to well-developed knowledge (A). However, as with the ’94 grading system complexity occurs in how to interpret the requirements since the students are assessed without standardised procedures. A possible exception is in the subjects where national tests are available but even there grading standards are unclear<sup>48</sup>. Therefore, a similar conclusion is reached as to the documents from ’94. It means the criteria and knowledge requirements on the one hand are left open for interpretations and possibilities to include the abilities of gifted students. On the other hand, these are not directly mentioned which means such an approach to teaching is left to the individual teacher’s own interpretation.

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<sup>48</sup> In an assessment project initiated by the School Inspectorate running between 2009 and 2019, approximately 60% of open answer responses received a different grade when re-marked. Most commonly, the first examiner, most often the student’s own teacher, was more generous than the examiner hired by the Inspectorate. <https://www.skolinspektionen.se/beslut-rapporter-statistik/publikationer/regeringsrapporter/2020/ombedomning-av-nationella-prov-2019/>

## Conclusion

To conclude, the 1994 reform represents the highest point of integration in this analysis, in that differentiating strategies were erased as far as possible in both elementary and upper secondary education. Rather than applying detailed and specific descriptions of content and methods, the '94 curricula argue these should be broad and the details set locally by the teacher. For example, on the topic of categorisation, the document reduces the number of student categories by former committees and policy documents. Instead, 'every student' is used to include students of undefined ability, with the exception of 'students in difficulty' or 'in need of extra support'. Moreover, the former distinction between practical and theoretical ability, first found in the divide between students in Folk School and students in Grammar School is largely erased, as both categories of students should be given an equal status and qualify for further studies. As a result, the reform generates an openness to many possible interpretations of how and what to teach and to whom. At the same time, without centralised policy standards and definitions to measure performance against, teachers are left without much guidance.

After 2010 there is a return to more regulative prescriptions, including how to identify and support students in need. Meanwhile, very little is said about students possessing attributes in the cluster concept other than what could be implied in descriptions such as 'student' or 'all students'. On the topic of teaching strategies, the texts are no longer organised around how strategies can be used to challenge students to reach further, as was the case when the two parallel system first became integrated, and nothing is mentioned about high ability. Indirectly, however, since acceleration remains an option, the documents could be read in terms of an implied reference to fast learners. In relating this conception to the cluster model, it means only the cell relating to fast learners is high-lighted.

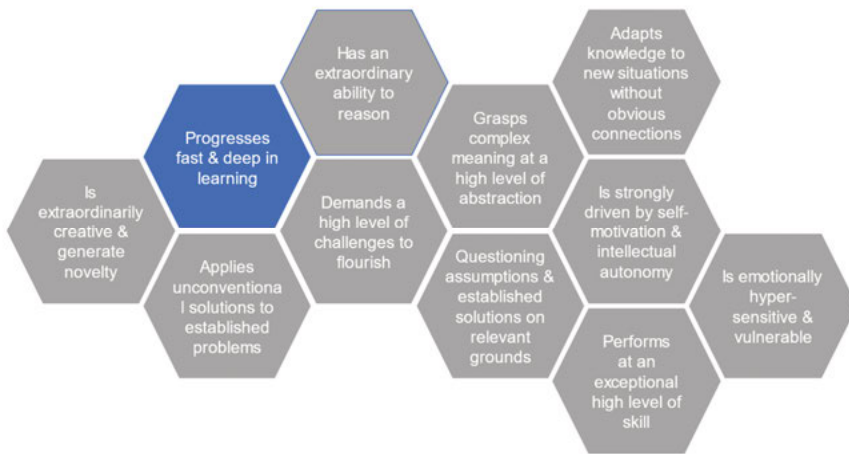


Figure 8:1 Giftedness in School Policy 1969/22

However, in the most recent Education Act (2010:800) a new category is introduced in the ‘student who easily passes the minimal knowledge requirements’ indicating a return to a slightly wider and more pronounced conception of student ability. This conception is extended further in documents by the three main school authorities, which will be addressed in the next and final chapter of this part of the data analysis.



## Chapter 9: Contemporary Policy as Text – Three Additional Voices on Giftedness

In addition to the curriculum documents analysed in Chapter 6 to 8, the three main Swedish education authorities; SNAE, the School Inspectorate and SPSM have published documents referring directly to the concept of giftedness. This final section of text analysis will consider these more recent contributions, before moving on to Part 3 and the contemporary teacher enactments of giftedness. As we saw in the analysis of the reform documents, the main focus was on the fulfilling of minimal requirements for most students and special attention to those who encountered difficulties. It is no surprise then that the reintroduction high performance and later ‘giftedness’ would generate some friction.

### SNAE and ‘The High Performer’

The first document in this section is the report *High Performing Students, High Performances and Teaching* (2012)<sup>49</sup> published by SNAE. The report is the result of an increasingly international perspective on education in Sweden. Firstly, the text refers to declining results among the highest performing students in Sweden on the PIRLS, PISA and TIMSS assessments. The situation is described as: “a signal that education is in need of improving its support in learning that results in reaching the highest levels” (SNAE 2012:6). A second motivation comes from *The Recommendation 1248* by the European Council (1994). The latter specifically addresses a need for the member states of the EU to improve educational provision for gifted students, including identification procedures, and teaching strategies.

Rather than accommodating to the requests in the *Recommendation* SNAE responds by stating that what is required by the EC already exists in the Swedish policy documents. This argument is motivated by reference to Chapter 3:3§ in the Education Act (SFS 2010:800), and its emphasis on the right of all students to an education that allows them to develop as far as they can and that is adjusted according to their needs and circumstances. SNAE refers specifically to the description of “students who easily passes the minimal knowledge

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<sup>49</sup> SNAE (2012) *Högpresterande elever, höga prestationer och undervisningen*.

requirements". The authority refers to the Bill 2009/10:165, quoted in the previous section, and the claim that there are higher expectations here than merely a passing grade.

On the topic of categorisation, SNAE also addresses the definition of giftedness. The concept is firstly equated to high performance, which in turn is defined as receiving the highest results on international assessments, alternatively "students who with a bit of support would be able to perform at a high level" (SNAE 2012:18). The argument continues by comparing high-performing students and 'average performers'. High-performing students are then categorised as more confident about their ability to learn and more motivated, both intrinsically, in terms of their interest in the subject, and extrinsically, in terms of seeing the subject as useful. SNAE also correlates high performance with high socio-economic background, claiming that, to a great extent, high performing students are found in families with "a larger amount of so-called cultural capital in comparison to the average performers" (SNAE 2012:7).

In addition, SNAE claims that an increasing number of researchers "renegotiate a view of giftedness away from being something innate and instead towards something learned, which requires significant effort on the behalf of the student to develop" (SNAE 2012:8). In a second reference to research, they claim high-performance is largely dependent on "non-cognitive competences", for example, attitudes and behaviours such as "a belief in one's own ability, motivation and stamina" (SNAE 2012:8). Thirdly, SNAE refers to a dissatisfaction from within the field giftedness research with a lack of a common definition of giftedness, with giftedness as something static and that there was too strong an emphasis on genetic predisposition. It is stated:

Results in recent research contradict such a view of giftedness (*begåvning*). Instead, it argues for a view of giftedness as an aspect of humanity, something to a great extent learnt and transformable in need of significant encouragement and effort to develop. Such a view speaks of gifted education rather than gifted students, and of creating giftedness rather than about discovering (SNAE 2012:38).

The report then refers to the same work of Borland (2005) that was mentioned in Chapter 3, which argues for gifted education without the need to categorise students as gifted. The second part of Borland's argument, that this is not the same as saying that gifted students do not exist, is left out of SNAE's argument. Instead, SNAE refers to "some research in Sweden" (SNAE 2012:39) that agrees with this view of giftedness as learned.

In conclusion, SNAE states there is no borderline between a high ability and cultural capital. Therefore, support for high-performing students' turns into helping more people develop these abilities. Furthermore, SNAE claims, a common denominator between high-performing students in international assessments and gifted students in research are non-cognitive aspects, such as

motivation. Since high-performing students are found in families with a higher level of education it is argued “it is likely that a tradition to study at home has an impact on to what extent the students are encouraged to study and thereby what attitudes they have” (SNAE 2012:10). Without clarifying what research and how the conclusion was reached, SNAE states:

The research referred to put a lot of focus on teaching when it comes to performances at a high level. In this research it is becoming increasingly common to claim that giftedness is, to a great extent, abilities that have been learned, abilities with a potential to be developed and thereby to a large extent are possible to influence. According to this research, learning at a high level is usually the result of a great deal of experience and practice (SNAE 2012:10).

Connecting such a claim to the topic of teaching strategies and the role of the teacher, SNAE then argues in favour of making adjustments for the students in question. In agreement with *The Recommendation 1248* it is argued that these should be taught within the ordinary school system, rather than separately, and to be done “discreetly” to “avoid the innate danger of labelling, with all its undesired consequences to society” (*The Recommendation 1248*, quoted in SNAE 2012:9). In contrast to statements made in former curricula, SNAE continues to emphasise the role of the teacher as someone who promotes student motivation by providing challenging materials and acknowledging previous performances, as well as offering a possibility for progress in learning. Students need support by a knowledgeable teacher in meeting more complex material, in particular students who might not find such support from home (SNAE 2012:10-11). The report mentions acceleration, enrichment and ability grouping, and the importance of using content that is flexible, challenging at the appropriate level, and additional to regular learning tasks. Somewhat surprisingly, instead of continuing with what could be positively gained by making these adjustments, schematically the report then returns to the previous conception by focusing only on the negative effects of ability grouping. It is stated:

In particular when it comes to ability grouping there are warnings against a number of risks. These mostly concern the students taught at the lower levels, such as low levels of expectation and locking effects.<sup>50</sup> Some risks also concern the high-performing students. Above all, these concern the experience of stress due to too high expectations and teachers who assume the students to be more even in their performances than they actually are, in comparison to each other, over time and between course components (SNAE 2012:9).

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<sup>50</sup> Locking effect is defined as:” limited possibilities to make choices at a later stage in education” (SNAE 2012:45).

The lexicalisation resembles the argument in former documents by referring to ‘warnings’, ‘risk’ ‘locking effects’ and ‘stress’. Schematically, it emphasises vulnerability and that the role of the teacher involves being careful with setting expectations of the students. In addition, when SNAE addresses teaching strategies to improve high-performance it does so by providing an argument emphasising the perspective of low performance. Another example of such a perspective is found in the following:

So, it seems that there are peer effects present [...] and that they primarily go from top and down. Higher achieving peers help their lower-performing classmates, directly and/or as role models, whereas being placed in a class with a greater or lesser share of lower performing students does not seem to matter for the top achievers (SNAE 2012:44).

*In summary*, when demands to improve conditions for gifted students is brought to the attention of Swedish education authorities from an international context, SNAE responds by relating the request to already existing policy documents. They argue that Chapter 3:3§ of the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) refers to students who are categorised as gifted, despite neither giftedness nor high ability being directly mentioned. Recall from the previous chapter that the categories present here are ‘students’, ‘students in difficulties’ or those who ‘reach the minimal knowledge requirements’. SNAE is reluctant to use the actual concept of giftedness and focus instead on the category of ‘high performance’. What seems to be the case, therefore, is that SNAE is in two minds about making these adjustments. The way they manage to integrate them is by arguing not only against the use of giftedness and in favour of high performance, but also that the latter is dependent on social class, an attitude, and something primarily developmental and possible to learn. Even if SNAE justifies this view of giftedness in research, it is only through selecting sources that support the purpose. This narrow presentation of the topic can be interpreted as a prior preference for this view. In conclusion, the arguments and conclusions presented by SNAE imply a negative rather than neutral stance towards giftedness and something of a resistance to adopting the terms used by the Council, despite conceding that certain strategies in this area should be used in teaching.

### SNAE introducing ‘The Gifted as the Student in Need’

In 2015, SNAE published a second document in relation to giftedness, this time directly referring to the concept and entitled *Gifted Students (2015b)*<sup>51</sup>. In the years between the 2012 report and the 2015 document the view of the authority changes quite substantially. This new document is published in the name of SNAE but is actually written by a selection of named researchers and

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<sup>51</sup> SNAE (2015) *Särskild begåvning*

practitioners working in Sweden and argues for the inclusion of gifted students in education. It provides knowledge about giftedness, identification procedures, and practical teaching advice to be used in in-service training in schools around Sweden. For example, on the topic of teaching strategies, the document provides suggestions including explicit references to acceleration, enrichment, ability grouping and differentiated teaching. The document also addresses misconceptions about giftedness stating that gifted students do not manage well on their own, are not a homogenous group, can be hidden behind other types of behaviours, and are entitled to support. Like the previous 2012 document it refers to both the *Recommendation 1248* by the European Council and the Government Bill from 2009 but this time the texts explicitly use the Swedish concept for giftedness- 'särskild begåvning'. In contrast to the earlier document, there is a distinction made between giftedness and high performance and a statement that these are not interchangeable.

On the topic of categorisation, the document partially lexicalises gifted students in positive manner by referring to descriptors recognised in the cluster concept. For example, gifted students "reason in a nuanced way, think abstractly and understand complex ideas. They are often fast learners, they have good memory, and draw conclusions beyond what is obvious" (SNAE 2015b:1.2, 4). They are also positively categorised as ideal students having "a hunger for knowledge [...] ask deep questions and want to understand connections", "they read a great amount and find pleasure in doing so" they "have a passion for precision", "intellectual curiosity" and they contribute to a positive learning environment by being "a great asset if the teachers are aware of their abilities, their way of thinking and are able to deal with the fact that the teacher might not be the one who is the most knowledgeable" (SNAE 2015b:1.2, 7).

Schematically, the document also presents contrasting characterisations emphasising the negative. For example, in the very first paragraph, the reader is introduced to giftedness by three fictive case descriptions of students. The first is Elvira who: "hates tight clothes, high noises and who does not want to wait for her turn". The second is William who: "even though he knew the alphabet before school start [has] problems in reading as well as in numeracy" and lastly Denise, who: "is perceived to be a loner" and "is rarely physically active during break time" (SNAE 2015b:1.1, 2). Despite the previous positive characterisation, these kinds of negative characterisation dominate the descriptions in the material as a whole. This general conception is lexicalised through the frequent use of the word 'many' and 'often' and by negatively in describing what the gifted students are unwilling or unable to do.

Further evidence for this argument scheme is found in the large number of risks listed. Gifted students are at risk of becoming under stimulated and alienated (SNAE 2015b:1.1, 7), there is a risk of self-doubt, a risk of not being seen as gifted, and a risk of being reduced to their giftedness (SNAE 2015b:1.2, 8). The gifted student is also at risk of becoming "a very sad and angry child"

(SNAE 2015b:1.2, 6). There is a long list of problematic behavioural factors, such as becoming disruptive in class, lonely, closed in, suppressing personality, psychological illnesses, a sense of losing oneself and a need to suppress abilities to become socially accepted, to feel different or not being accepted for the person they are. While “some are enjoying themselves” others are described as suffering in silence and “[m]any have difficulties in executing simple tasks and experience discomfort when being forced to do things they have mastered for a long time” (SNAE 2015b:1.2, 7).

The material therefore could be interpreted as employing something of the same categorisation of students as the curriculum from 1969 in its strong emphasis on gifted students as vulnerable. In the present document this state is interpreted further as a reason as to why gifted students are in need of special education and that “closest to the students are teachers, special educationalists and the pastoral care team” (SNAE 2015b:1.1, 12). On the topic of identification gifted students must be identified and ‘referred’ (*utredd*) as it: “provides many answers” (SNAE 2015b:1.2, 9) regarding what methods should be used in teaching them and the organisation of their learning environments. There are further echoes of the 1940 committees’ favourable disposition towards diagnostic tests and checklists of typical characteristics. Similarly, it is stated the assessment may need to be complemented by a psychological investigation by the pastoral team. For example, “If the school finds that a student has got into difficulties, or is suffering emotionally, tests measuring the intelligence quotient can be useful” (SNAE 2015b: 1.1, 11) On the one hand, it is stated that access to additional support should not depend on having a diagnosis. Having said this, the same lexicalisation is used as in the use of diagnosis in connection with special educational issues. An argument is constructed describing how “children who give evidence of a precocious behaviour and special talents” are entitled to “additional support” but are also “in need of support and attention” and how the pastoral care team through their experiences in “identifying children in difficulties” can identify also “students *with* giftedness” (SNAE 2015b: 1.4, 5) and “students who *have* giftedness” (SNAE 2015b:1.4, 5, my italization).

As mentioned in Chapter 3 on previous research, there has been a tendency to define giftedness not in absolute terms but in relation to other students, something which is also clearly visible in the SNAE document, for example, by specifying a prevalence rate for giftedness (taken to be 5 percent of the student population). At the same time, the document states that this should not be seen “as an absolute figure but meant as an indication of the number of students addressed in the material” (SNAE 2015b:1.1, 9). This is quite a different kind of argument to that of the 2012 document. This earlier document presents a view that the non-cognitive factors essential in the definition of giftedness are attainable through motivation and practice, implying that these abilities are attainable for everyone who works hard enough. In the current

material, such a view is contrasted by underlining how gifted students are different from the ‘normal student’. Evidence of such a view is found in the lexicalisation in the quotation “Their intellectual curiosity and ability for abstract thinking means they are far ahead of their peers of the same age” (SNAE 2015b:1.2, 7) and “When deviation from the normal distribution increases, so does the difference to the normal student, not just in quantitative but also in qualitative terms” (SNAE 2015b:1.1,10) and that “to be gifted is to be different” (SNAE 2015b:1.2, 6). Perhaps the strongest example is found in “Many need to be allowed to cooperate with other gifted students – to feel normal – at least in parts of teaching” (SNAE 2015b:1.2, 10).

*To summarise*, in the material from 2015, all characteristics found in the cluster concept are mentioned in describing gifted students. This means that on the one hand the 2015 in-service material provides the most extensive conceptualisation of giftedness in the text analysis.

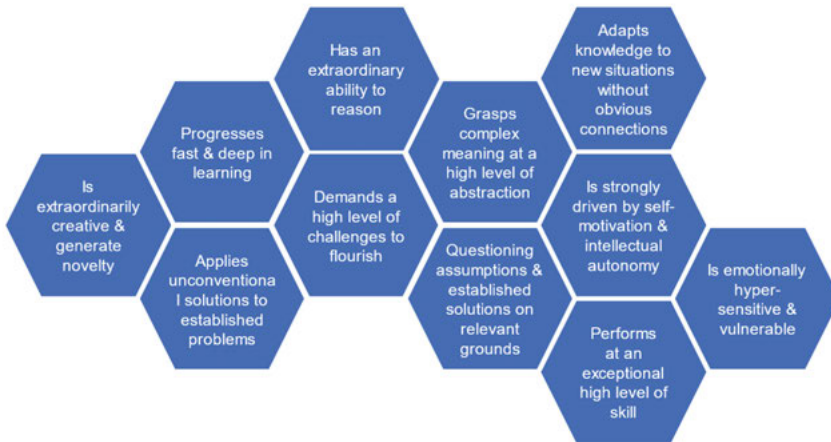


Figure 9:1 Giftedness in SNAE 2015b

Gifted students are thus categorised as possessing several positive qualities, such as being fast learners, creative and excellent logical thinkers. In contrast, they are also categorised as being at risk, being sensitive and in need of care and, through the use of the same diagnostic terminology, a subject for the pastoral team. The interpretation therefore places the gifted student in the same category as the ‘student in need’ rather than in opposition to it. Contrary to the view of the 2012 document in which giftedness is seen as high performance and available to all who are prepared to put in the work, the SNAE 2015b text recognises giftedness as being something significantly different from categories involving other students. A contributing factor to this contrast is that schematically more emphasis is placed on the need to identify students and on

differences than on similarities between them. Consequently, even if the in-service material provides justification for inclusion of gifted students in education, the way the argument is constructed also creates a divide between students having the opposite, exclusionary effect (see also Magnússon & Sims, 2021).

## The School Inspectorate on high performance and equity

As mentioned in Chapter 5 on sample selection, Sweden has a long tradition of regulating education in the form of inspections and since 2008 this is the responsibility of the School Inspectorate (Skolinspektionen). Between 2011 and 2018, the Inspectorate published three reports where, as a matter of equity, they argue for more support to high ability students.

In the first report, *Different Students - Same Teaching* (2011)<sup>52</sup> the aim is to examine to what extent teaching in schools is individualised, understood as offering the possibility for “all students to gain maximum results” (the School Inspectorate 2011:11). In relation to earlier policy documents this implies a redefinition of the meaning of individualisation. This report was written before SNAE had introduced gifted students as a category in education, so on the topic of categorisation there are no references to gifted students as such. Instead, the report uses the categories “students at risk of not reaching the knowledge requirements” as well as “students who find it easy to learn and who are in need of more challenges”, “students who have reached further” and “students who complete exercises quickly” (the School Inspectorate 2011:31). In comparison, the second report, *Thematisk analys: Challenges in teaching – Many Students in Need of More Stimulation and Challenges* (2016)<sup>53</sup> was written after the publication by the SNAE. As a result, the Inspectorate acknowledges giftedness by explicitly referring to the concept (*särskild begåvning*) and by including SNAE’s in-service document in its list of references. Yet, the Inspectorate defines the students in focus of their report as “not gifted, they rarely stick out, and they are not in need of support or additional adjustments to manage in school” (the School Inspectorate 2016:11). Instead, they are categorised as “students who with relatively simple measures could reach further”, “students who find it easy to learn and want to move on faster”, and “students with sufficient knowledge but who are not encouraged to reach further” (The School Inspectorate 2016:11). Why this distinction between gifted students and these categories is made is not clear. One possibility is the authors of the report want to distance themselves from the characterisation of giftedness due to Roland S. Persson as “students who continue to surprise in

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<sup>52</sup> The School Inspectorate (2011) *Olika elever samma undervisning*.

<sup>53</sup> The School Inspectorate (2016) *Tematisk analys: Utmaningar i undervisningen - många elever behöver mer stimulans och utmaningar*.

terms of knowledge and application in one of more areas, in school and in everyday life” (Persson 1997).

The last of the three reports, *Challenging Teaching for High-Performing Students – a Quality Assessment at Upper Secondary Schools’ Natural Science Programmes* (2018a)<sup>54</sup> contains the most explicit recognition of giftedness. For example, there are references to research from the giftedness field, both nationally and internationally. However, as in the previous two reports, the equivalent 2018 category is constructed using a different lexicalisation. As the title suggests, the report focuses on students in five Natural Science programmes with the highest admittance rate in the country. These are complemented by students at two Peak Programmes in mathematics, together with students in Natural Science Programmes at 16 randomly chosen schools across the country. Why this particular group of students was chosen is not clear in the report. It means the focus is limited to high-performing students in Mathematics, rather than a wider range of abilities. It is interesting in this respect that giftedness is explicitly defined in one of the appendices as “students who continue to surprise in terms of knowledge and application in one of more areas, in school and in everyday life” (the School Inspectorate 2018a:50).<sup>55</sup> Reading the three reports in succession, it is possible to detect a gradual acknowledgement of giftedness, while at the same time noting that the authority is reluctant to make this category the sole subject of their reports.

The Inspectorate emphasises a critical stance regarding the topic of teaching strategies for the students in question. In the 2011 report, the Inspectorate states that more than 50 percent of the sample schools are characterised by too low expectations regarding student ability. The work of the students is described as generated out of an orientation towards problems, focused on inabilities and express a satisfaction in only making the students pass. In addition, enrichment tasks are offered without any adjustments to the specific interest of the students, and students who complete their work quickly must wait for the others to catch up instead of moving on. The Inspectorate finds that when individual adjustments are made, they are based on an assumption of what the students are able to do, without investigating further the full extent of their abilities. For example, in mathematics, these students are often set standard exercises, meaning they either receive more or fewer exercises of the same type instead of more stimulating learning tasks (the School Inspectorate 2011).

In the 2016 report the Inspectorate emphasises how there is no contradiction between supporting both students who need help to pass and students who

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54 The School Inspectorate (2018a) *Utmanande undervisning för högpresterande elever - kvalitetsgranskning på gymnasieskolans naturvetenskapliga program*.

55 The definition is referenced to the report by SKL previously mentioned in relation to sample selection in Chapter 5. However, the definition originates from Roland S Persson (1997).

are in need of more challenges. At the same time, they report how schools explicitly only make a priority for students to pass. For example, students receive exercises to practice what they already know, and they are offered additional tasks without any support or feedback from the teacher. Again, rather than being set more advanced or testing questions and tasks beyond what they already know students are offered tasks that satisfy a low level of expectation.

A primary focal point of the Inspectorate is the topic of interest and motivation. There is a schematic shift here that contrasts sharply with conceptions in previous policy documents. The 2016 report emphasises that facing challenges is something positive for students and is not demotivating. This new positivity towards challenges is further reinforced in the topic of the role of the teacher; the Inspectorate argues that there is a need for more investment in intrinsic motivation, which is seen as the result of being challenged:

Researchers interested in motivation point to how an extensive focus on extrinsic motivation factors – grades, praise or other types of “rewards” – are at risk of inhibiting intrinsic motivation. Therefore, teachers should focus on increasing students’ intrinsic motivation. For example, by providing the students with the opportunity to do something they have previously not mastered, to discover new abilities in themselves, and support them in realising such matters. A belief in the students’ ability, positive feedback and constructive feedback are significant factors in the teachers’ approaches. A strong sense of intrinsic motivation makes it easier to maintain what has been learned but also to dare taking on new challenges (The School Inspectorate 2016:10).

The lexicalisation of the description of the relationship between motivation and challenges is quite different from that of the earlier curriculum documents (FSC 1955, Lgr 69) as seen in the positive lexicalisations ‘opportunity’, ‘belief in ability’ and ‘daring’ new challenges. This stark contrast carries over to the use of negative lexicalisation. For example, ‘risk’ is now used to describe the worry that motivation is inhibited by ‘extensive focus’ on praise and reward – exactly the opposite view to the earlier documents. In the same vein, ‘positive feedback’ is followed by ‘constructive feedback’ implying not only that the work is good but that it can be developed further. Nevertheless, the report provides evidence that there is a degree of uncertainty among teachers regarding the right thing to do in terms of providing challenges. For example, with echoes from former policy documents, one teacher is quoted in saying: “I am afraid of putting demands on the students that make them lose their lust and motivation for learning” (the School Inspectorate 2016:9). This seems to indicate that the lines of argument from previous policy texts are still deeply entrenched in practice.

In addition, the Inspectorate (2018a) report points to a structural lack of cooperation and coordination concerning high-performing students and that they are in a sense left to their own devices. Comments by Heads of School in the report indicate that such students are free to take on additional subjects, at

the same time admitting there is no structural provision for such solutions, for example, in terms of timetabling. On the topic of collaboration between teachers there is no mention of any in-school or wider networking concerning high-performing students in any of the schools targeted by the inspection in spite of such strategies having been set in practice for a considerable time. Neither are the pastoral teams of the sample schools involved in supporting high-performing students, for example, in developing coping strategies for stress management. Instead, their work is directed towards students at the risk of failing, according to the Inspectorate. This absence of engagement is observed more widely in the report where it seems that teachers are uncertain whether supporting high-performing students is even included in their job description (the School Inspectorate 2018a).

The Inspectorate concludes: “Students who find it easy to learn and who are in need of more challenges and stimulation to develop in their learning are also entitled to adjustments in line with their circumstances and needs” (School Inspectorate 2011:31). They also identify two actors significant in whether challenges are offered or not, the Head of School and the teacher. For example, the Inspectorate claims: “When teachers do not have enough competence, or when there is a continuous change in teachers, it leads to a lack of continuity in teaching. In such situations, the students tell our inspectors that it feels like they either repeat what they have done already or start all over again” (the School Inspectorate 2016:9). The Inspectorate states:

There is a certain covariation between a teachers’ subject knowledge and the quality of teaching out of the perspective of these inspections. Lessons where teachers, in addition to being qualified had experience from research and/or relevant work experience were seen to be able to challenge the high-performing students to a greater extent. In interviews with participants in lessons identified as consisting of a very low level of challenges, the students often said that the teacher might be pedagogically insufficient but when they are strong in their subjects they intend to listen to the teacher as much as they can and instead do their work outside of class. This means high level of subject knowledge among the teachers has great significance for the high-performing students’ motivation to perform well in their subjects (The School inspectorate 2018a:19).

*In summary*, in the three reports, the Inspectorate actively avoids referring to gifted students. Instead, they refer to some students as highly able, who find it easy to learn, progress fast in their learning, and who are in need of more challenges. This could be seen as an indication of an uncertainty in defining giftedness and thereby acknowledging such students. Still, the characteristics could be seen as relating the cluster as visualised in the illustration below:

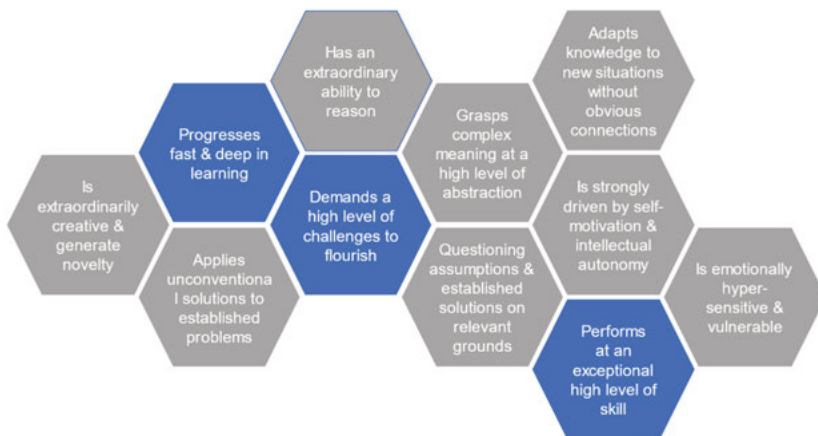


Figure 9:2 High Ability in Policy; the School Inspectorate 2011/18

In addition, the descriptions given by the three reports by the School Inspectorate are in agreement with findings in previous research in Sweden that are critical of the lack in focus on gifted students. These reports are quite different from the descriptions by SNAE (2015) as there are no references to diagnosis. Instead, it is possible to detect how critical the Inspectorate is of what they find to be insufficient support by schools in providing stimulating and challenging education to the students targeted in their inspections. Organisationally, emphasis is placed on the need for suitable qualifications for teaching high-performing students, on the need for raising expectations of student performance, and on the developing structures for supporting teachers engaging with this group. Finally, the report questions the long-held assumption that praise leads to motivation.

On one interpretation of these findings, it is in no way surprising that teachers are doubtful of their roles in relation to high performing students. This text analysis points to a long tradition of the role of the teacher being oriented towards avoiding challenges and supporting students at risk, a view the Inspectorate criticises. The result is mixed messages to teachers on policy enactment. This divide is visible also in the role played by the last of the central actors - SPSM.

## SPSM advising special needs but not ‘The Gifted’

It is clear from the quotations and references in the analysis that there is a tradition in Swedish education of great concern for students in need of a variety of support structures. This ranges from the provision of medical healthcare in the earlier documents to a strong contemporary focus on students’ emotional and mental states. The historical background chapter mentioned that students in support classes increased by 300 percent between the 1940’s to the beginning of the 1970’s. More recent figures indicate that at least one student in each class in Sweden has received a diagnosis of one form or other (Richardson 2010:158, Socialstyrelsen 2019)<sup>56</sup>. There has been a strong commitment to focus resources on students categorised as at risk. Further evidence of this commitment is the establishment by the Swedish government of a separate authority, SPSM (the National Agency for Special Pedagogy), in charge of special educational needs.

On their webpage, the authority presents itself as “the largest source of knowledge in special educational matters in the country” (SPSM *Vårt erbjudande*). However, on searching the webpage for topics about giftedness and gifted students very little is found. A search performed in February 2018 yielded just two pages. The first page consisted of a description of giftedness lexicalised in close connection to NPF-diagnoses<sup>57</sup> and a special needs category. The gifted student was described as someone deviant from the norm, who was emotionally sensitive and vulnerable, and at risk. There was also a second page which consisted of blog posts about giftedness by one of their employees and a short list of suggested readings (Magnússon & Sims 2021).

When the same search was repeated in October 2021, the first page had been removed. Instead, information is limited to the short list of references and suggested readings. The same three books as in the first search are given as suggestions: two translations from international research (one of them out of print) and one written by a teacher working in Sweden. There is only one reference to research: Roland S. Persson. The four doctoral theses published on this topic in Sweden are omitted from the list (Pettersson 2011, Mattsson 2013, Szabo 2017, Mellroth 2018). Instead, there is a link to a single master thesis from 2014. There are also weblinks provided to a selection of interest organizations and social media fora, a reference to SNAE’s (2015) material and to the School Inspectorate. In sum, the content of the current page does not give an indication of any systematic searches of available sources by SPSM. This meagre result could also be interpreted as an indication that, in the eyes of SPSM, giftedness lies outside the bounds of special education. In May 2021, SNAE published a newsletter on their own webpage clarifying

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<sup>56</sup> The National Board of Health and Welfare

<sup>57</sup> NPF stands for Neuro Psychological Function Variation and is a Swedish concept invented by professor Christoffer Gillberg at Gothenburg University (Hjörne, Uppsala University 211103).

both that the aim of education should reach beyond the level of passing, and that entitlement to additional resources and support concerns both those at risk of failing and other students, followed by a link to their support material on giftedness (SNAE 2021). Such a statement could be interpreted as an indication of SPSM's responsibility to act accordingly. In May 2023, SPSM has again revised their page by taking down all former information about giftedness. Instead, they state that since giftedness is not a disability, they do not offer any advice concerning these students and refer the issue to SNAE<sup>58</sup>.

## Giftedness as Text - Conclusions

There are a number of points that can be made in response to the first research question on conceptualisations of giftedness in text. Firstly, it is possible to trace the evolution of this concept across the change in the structure of the education system from two separate systems to one integrated system. From the beginning, there is a division in localised meaning that matches the division in the systems. The students to be educated are found only in the Grammar School, while the texts indicate a low level of expectation regarding the Folk School students' ability and willingness to learn. Any awareness of gifted students is therefore more likely to be found in Grammar School than Folk School. But there is little attention paid to giftedness on either side of the divide. To the extent any specialised teaching strategies are mentioned, these are not the main focus of the documents but are supplements to regular teaching. The student engaging in these activities is required to be self-supporting in parallel to the regular learning commanding the teacher's attention. The motivation for this position is that it concerns only a few students whose skills are not useful for society in general. These claims assume that education is to be practiced for the benefit of students who possess near average ability. Where students were encouraged, voluntarily, to take on individual projects, or additional studies, continue their studies over the summer holiday, or study at the advanced level, these were left ungraded.

Having said this, it is possible to trace the strategies recognisable as suggestions for gifted teaching in the texts, throughout the history of the reform. These take the form of acceleration, enrichment activities, electives, and individual studies. They are presented in the most direct form at the point where organisational differentiation gives way to pedagogical differentiation. As time passes, initial teaching strategies for supporting gifted students either disappear, as in the case of ability grouping, or become de-personalised, that is, offered to students in general. From the 1960's and 1970's, attention in the documents swings gradually towards 'the student in need' rather than equal attention to the support of both categories of students. At the same time, a

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<sup>58</sup> Accessed on October 10, 2023.

new vocabulary is applied to categorising these students in place of terms based on ability such as ‘conscientious’ or ‘in different circumstances’. One such transition is found in the enrichment component in the curriculum in the Individual Study; the older term ‘academically able’ (GSS 1928:39§) transforms, via ‘particularly interested and conscientious’ (FSC 55:119), to ‘a student’ (SFS 1962:439, Ch.10:10).

Another example of change in the trajectory of written policy is found in how the advice to individualise teaching gradually becomes directed more towards making special-educational adjustments. In line with this movement, the prescribed role of the teacher changes in terms of responsibility, mentality, and power. From being categorised as an authoritative figure responsible for providing knowledge and disciplining the students, the role of the teacher moves towards the teaching of democratic values and assuming more relational responsibilities to support the students in their social and emotional development.

Approximately 40 years after the integrated school system was set in motion, changes were gradually made to reintroduce students of high ability as a category in policy. As described in the historical background, in 2009, students “with a particular interest”, “aptitude” and “talent” - “the ones who want to reach further” (SFS 2008:793) appears in the Peak Programmes. In 2011, the School Inspectorate levelled a strong line of criticism against the limited support teachers provide for high-performing students on the grounds of inequity. In the same year, changes were also made in the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) detailing that resources were to be invested in also stimulating students ‘who easily passes the minimal knowledge requirements’. In 2012, SNAE responds to a request by the European Council on how to support gifted students in the education system, and in 2015 the authority initiates the publication of a support material explicitly using the Swedish term for giftedness—*särskild begåvning*. Nevertheless, when giftedness re-enters it is interpreted by SNAE in two ways, either as equal to the high-performing, fast-working student and as something available to all through practice, or as strongly connected to a sense of diagnosis and special needs. Meanwhile, SPSM, the main state authority responsible for issues to do with special education, provides minimal advice to teachers concerning giftedness.

In conclusion, regarding the analysis of policy as text, the three main school authorities represent different views with respect to the categorisation of giftedness, what counts as special needs and the conditions under which non-standard educational provision is given. Consequently, a teacher trying to enact the statements of these authorities on giftedness and education to support such students, would be caught between 200 years of policy and three different contemporary conceptualisations. Indeed, there is evidence in the text of a reluctance to support gifted students. But there is also the problem that support strategies are hidden inside other structures or found in backwaters of policy outside the main documents. Therefore, it could be argued that, in enacting

giftedness, the text documents do not leave the teachers without guidance, even if it depends on them making their own interpretation of their responsibilities and roles. To what extent contemporary teachers are enabled or constrained by this relation to policy will be analysed in the next part of the thesis on contemporary teachers' enactment of giftedness.

## Part 3



# GIFTEDNESS ENACTED IN CONTEMPORARY TEACHING PRACTICES

As clarified in the introduction to the thesis, a policy is not just formulated in text, but also through enactments (Ball 1993). In order to address the second research question on conceptualisation of giftedness and policy enactment this next part of the thesis is based on data collected via a pilot survey and unstructured interviews with teachers teaching in contemporary classrooms. It means there is a change in perspective from conceptualisations in text to conceptualisations in actions, as these are described by the respondents.

The interview sample is made up of three categories of teachers: those who teach in the Swedish national system and who explicitly state they teach students who are gifted, teachers in the IB Diploma Programme, and teachers teaching in the Peak Programme. As clarified in Chapter 5, the interviews covered the following topics:

- Background school data
- The teachers' background and qualifications
- Resource allocation
- Application of teaching adjustments
- Definition and identification procedures

In the following, Chapter 10 describes the roles the teachers play in their enactments and the resources that enable or constrain them in doing so, which covers the three first topics above. Chapter 11 relates to the fourth topic by describing teacher enactments in terms of the strategies the teachers use in their teaching (Tomlinson 1996, 2014, Rogers 2007). Chapter 12 contains the last topic in the list by describing the teachers' categorisations of students and enactment through definition and identification. Finally, at the end of Chapter 12 a summary of the findings in Part 3 is given including what processes of enactment it is possible to deduce from the teachers' enactments of giftedness and their relationships to the findings in the text analysis.



# Chapter 10: Teacher Enactments and Support to Enact

As we saw in Chapter 4 on theory, teachers’ enactments can include a range of different actions. These actions have resource implications – not only legally in terms of confirmation and support by policy documents but also financially, for example by making investments in their further training. There are also ‘network resources’ that may be necessary, for example collaboration between teachers, or building networks where teachers can exchange or borrow ideas from each other (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006, Ball 1993, 2015, Ball et al. 2012). In the pilot survey responses there was variation between schools regarding the extent to which the work supporting gifted students was described as an integrated collaborative process. While some respondents were supported by management and colleagues, others were working on their own. Where additional people were involved, these could be divided into three groups; teaching staff, management, and members of the pastoral care team. Based on these results, it could be inferred that most collaboration is found between these actors. Note that the appearance of the pastoral team indicates that teaching gifted students includes a special needs dimension in the survey data.

## The National Education teachers

Table 10:1 Background data: National Education Teachers

<b>Name</b>	<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Size of School no. of students</b>	<b>Additional</b>
Edith	Primary, Year 1-3	Swe, Eng, H.Sci. STEM	200 (K-6)	
Selma	Middle Years, Year 5	Swe, N.Sci.	700 (K-9)	First Teacher
Dagmar	Middle Years, Year 5	STEM	700 (K-9)	First Teacher
Hjalmar	Upper Secondary	Ma, Phy.	2000	
Karin	Low Sec. Year 9	Ma, N.Sci.	500 (F-9)	

Abbreviations: Swe-Swedish, Eng-English, H.Sc- Human Sciences, STEM- Science-Technology-Engineering-Mathematics, N.Sc-Natural Science, Phy-Physics.

## Teacher background and enabling factors

In the National Education sample, the background and enabling factors vary between the teachers, from collaborative structures to single person responsibilities. One of the two participants remaining from the pilot study is **Edith**. Her school exemplifies how the investment in supporting gifted students has been made in a systematic manner. All members of teaching staff have been instructed by Mensa on how to identify and teach gifted students.<sup>59</sup> As a result, all teachers, and a network of additional members of staff jointly developed their teaching according to principles of differentiation, similar to the suggestions given by Tomlinson (1996) (see Chapter 3). This type of collaborative approach is described also by **Selma**, a second teacher from the pilot study. Financed by a former employer, she describes having taken a course at an international university to support her in developing inclusive teaching strategies for a variety of students, including those who are gifted. These strategies she has brought with her to her current school.

While Edith's role as teacher is focused mainly on teaching, Selma has been appointed also as a First Teacher. This means she is responsible for implementing gifted teaching strategies in her school. Her commitment includes 120 minutes per week where she leads assembly meetings, holds presentations, does classroom observations, gives advice to colleagues, and organises reading seminars and guest lectures. Selma has initiated a project where a group of colleagues have worked together on developing more challenging teaching plans in Swedish including compiling a set of challenging readings for students. To guide her work, Selma finds support in pedagogical literature, such as books by James Nottingham and John Hattie but also from practices found in other school systems such as from the U.S, England, Southeast Asia, and Denmark. She also cites parts of the SNAE (2015) in-service document as useful in developing their teaching strategies.

At the school where she works, Selma shares the responsibility for gifted teaching with **Dagmar**, who teaches mathematics. Like both Edith and Selma, Dagmar refers to other sources than the official education policy authorities. She says she has got her training in gifted teaching in a collaborative learning project under the guidance of Brainchild that took place at the school about ten years ago.<sup>60</sup> Another source of inspiration mentioned by Dagmar is the National Centre for Mathematics (NCM)<sup>61</sup> at Gothenburg University where

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<sup>59</sup> This is part of Mensa's Gifted Child Programme (GCP) which aims to increase knowledge and understanding of giftedness and to influence the way gifted students are taught in school. See further mensa.se.

<sup>60</sup> Brainchild is connected to Riksförbundet för Särskild Begåvning (RFSB). It is an interest organization working for changes in education and information about giftedness on a Swedish national basis (Brainchild).

<sup>61</sup> NCM is a centre run by researchers, PhD students and teachers in Mathematics at different levels of the school system. The centre provides a webpage specifically

she finds stimulus material to use in her teaching. Dagmar is appointed as a First Teacher in mathematics and given 60 minutes per week to devote to developing structures for gifted students. For example, she holds assembly meetings for the staff at all stages in the school, where they discuss research and explore new teaching methods, both within and across specific subjects. She also cooperates with the special educationalist responsible for the youngest students in school, and with the lower secondary teachers. She says: "I am there like an umbrella, to create unity, which we are very concerned about getting in our school. There shall be a sense of being one unit, and I'm building that bridge in mathematics" (D1).

One example in the national education sample where the significance of a supportive relationship to the management becomes evident is in the upper secondary school where **Hjalmar** teaches mathematics and physics. For a period of ten weeks, 15 students from lower secondary schools (age 14 to 15) in the area arrive for two hours of acceleration and enrichment activities in mathematics. In the second hour, the group is joined by an addition of two students in their last years of upper secondary school (age 18 to 19). Having completed all courses available in mathematics, these two students are accelerated and enrolled as students in mathematics at university. To illustrate the extent of their abilities, Hjalmar mentions how one of these students, a second-year, passed the university course in algebra with a top mark, before having been taught the equivalent component in the upper secondary course. Hjalmar argues for the importance in accelerating such a student since he claims there is no point in keeping him in a class and make him "repeat ad infinitum" (Hj1).

The promotion of the project and the dispensation of the two older students have all been organised by the Deputy Head of School, a former teacher colleague of Hjalmar's with a background in research in mathematics and giftedness. This person has dealt with all information about the project, externally as well as internally, to the feeder schools, and to all teachers in mathematics within the school, and he has appointed Hjalmar and one of his colleagues specifically for the position. As an example of collaboration, one of the feeder schools sent one of their own teachers along for the first session. The intention was for the teacher both to be inspired by Hjalmar's teaching, but also to see how it could be possible to set up a similar project in his or her school at lower secondary level to support middle school students.

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aimed to support mathematically gifted students run by the researchers in gifted education Linda Mattsson and Eva Pettersson. It provides teaching literature, workshops for teachers, conferences and networks (See further [www.ncm.se](http://www.ncm.se)).

## Constraining factors and mixed responses

Even if enabling factors are found for all the respondents, there are also examples of constraining factors. Consider the data provided by **Hjalmar**. Despite being supported by management and the feeder schools, his enrichment project has also been sensitive to change. From the beginning, the aim was for the project to run from August to May. Due to the pandemic, while regular teaching at his school transferred to on-line teaching, the enrichment project was not included and put on hold. As a result, during the nine-month period covered in the data collection process, the enrichment project was run only for ten weeks.

Other examples of constraints are found in the data provided by **Edith**. Even if the investment in teaching gifted students supported by Mensa started as a largely collaborative process, in the 16 months between Edith's participation in the pilot study and the first of the multiple interviews there were already a few changes. While many members of staff remained in their roles including those who attended the Mensa course, other people of significance left the school. For example, there is a new Head of School who according to Edith has no previous connection to the school's investment in gifted education. Edith is positive about this change while conceding that this new Head "has other priorities" (E1). In our last interview, Edith mentioned that this individual was already about to leave for another position. This means the school will be managed by the third Head of School in as many years, making continuity of their investments uncertain.

It is also noteworthy that a special educationalist who was involved in teaching gifted students from the beginning of the project was no longer available at the time of the first interview. Moreover, in the year before the first interview, the school had access to pedagogical support by two consultants from the council's special education unit. They were used to support the school in identifying gifted students by suggesting educational adjustments and running a mixed age-group enrichment project for students identified as gifted. At the time of the first of the multiple interviews, the collaboration with the team had terminated, partly because one of the consultants specialized in gifted education left for another position. The responsibility for the enrichment group was supposed to be taken over by a person involved in the after-school unit (*fritids*).<sup>62</sup> This person also left and among the remaining unit personnel, nobody had showed an interest in running the group.

Consequently, all specialized activities and additional support structures were terminated, leaving Edith and her colleagues to support the students in their individual classrooms. At the time of the survey, Edith was at the end of a four-year-cycle of teaching the same class of students which meant she knew

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<sup>62</sup> Activities set before and after school for children between the ages of 6 to 13 years. The activities are organised based on a mixture of leisure and educational aims, clarified in *The Education Act* and in *The Curriculum for Compulsory Education*.

the students and their educational needs well, including those she refers to as in the gifted category. Since then, she has started over with a new group of first year students.<sup>63</sup> She makes the point that social structures need to be in place before the learning process can take place. At the time of the first interview, this means Edith has put the gifted teaching strategies temporarily on hold while addressing disciplinary issues and issues in class dynamics. Still, the differentiation principles behind her teaching strategies remain the same. These will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Similarly, there are changes in **Selma's** working conditions. At the time of the pilot study, she was in the middle of running an enrichment activity she had initiated in which a group of students identified as gifted language learners got to take full responsibility for a school magazine. By the first interview this project had come to an end, for a variety of reasons. Additional support staff had left the school and students in the enrichment group had transferred to the next level where Selma does not teach. She also experienced difficulties in making the students prioritise her projects given that they were scheduled after regular school hours. Furthermore, in the first of the multiple interviews, Selma described her colleagues as “curious” about her work (S1). However, despite managerial support and her school having ‘challenging and individualised teaching’ as one of their internal goals, she mentions being constrained by resistance from some of her fellow teachers. For example, she claims there are doubts whether gifted students actually exist, and there are objections to finding the time to teach them. In part, Selma describes her work as “incredibly tough” and “very lonely” (S3), exemplified further in the following:

SELMA: At my school we have had a lot of teachers who've worked here for a very long time. And all these years they've been doing things in the same way, and they've been like a team. And then it's me. I'm in my fourth year now, and they think like: “Oh my God! Who does she think she is, trying to tell *us* what to do” (S3).

In response, Selma says since the Head of School expects the whole school to cooperate, she has given Selma the consent to maintain her work. At the same time, in Selma's perception “no other group of students has awoken such strong emotions” (S3).

Even if Selma and Dagmar work for the same management there are differences in terms of the resources available to them to do their work. Selma's enrichment group in Swedish was scheduled after school hours and therefore additional to the regular classes in the timetable. Selma therefore faced the difficulty that her enrichment work competed with the students' spare time activities. In mathematics, setting has been in place for ten years which means

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<sup>63</sup> In Swedish schools, the same teacher is most commonly responsible for teaching most subjects in a class for the full length of primary education (Year 1 to Year 3).

a possibility to offer students both acceleration and enrichment opportunities. In contrast to Selma's group in Swedish, all classes between Year 6 and Year 9 in mathematics are timetabled in parallel making it easier for students to move between different levels of difficulty, but also between year groups. On a few occasions in the interviews, Selma returns to how she would like to have the same principles in place for Swedish. Her goal is to get such a structure in place even if she sees it needs a change in the timetable and in appointing additional members of staff. In the last of the interviews, these changes have not yet been made in their school.

Despite the enabling factor of being permitted to group students by ability **Dagmar** also faces constraining factors such as the effect of changes in staff. A former colleague made use of a personal connection to a teacher teaching mathematics in a Peak Programme to gain advice on how to challenge her own students. At the time of the first interview, this teacher left for a position at a different school, which meant that the collaboration with the Peak Programme was no longer available. Yet, at the time of the second interview, the school appointed a teacher with experience in teaching Peak students as a permanent member of staff, making such a competence a permanent part of the school's internal structure.

In the examples above, the Head of School emerges as a key figure in enabling and supporting the teaching of gifted students. This role is also visible in the responses of **Karin**, the final teacher in the national sample. Over a 20-year period, on her own initiative she has read about giftedness and attended presentations and conferences on the subject. While the work in the gifted field of Edith, Selma, Dagmar, and Hjalmar could be described as being in an expansion phase, the situation for Karin is the opposite. According to her, a great deal of work concerning gifted students at her school came from her former Head of School, whom Karin describes as "deeply engaged in providing for gifted students" (K1). However, a year before the interview, this person left the school, and her replacement dismantled the structures set into practice, "due to financial reasons" (K1). For example, the new Head terminated the role Karin had as First Teacher responsible for school development in mathematics and for giving advice to colleagues on how to teach gifted students. An enrichment-oriented math club she ran for five years was closed. A team of special educationalists whose work was focused on gifted students either resigned or were allocated other responsibilities. The school's plan of action for gifted students has been "quietly phased out" according to Karin (K1).

Instead, the work concerning gifted students has been reduced to include only the students Karin teaches. This means that once-a-week one of her students in Year 9 attends a class in level 4 mathematics at an upper secondary school, while the rest of the time, he is taught by Karin together with the others

the class.<sup>64</sup> In the same class there is another student who was accelerated by one year in mathematics but remains a full-time student in her classroom. In addition, after complaints made by a guardian, Karin has mentored a gifted student in another class whom she has seen for 30 minutes every week. Rather than challenging the student academically Karin claims the aim of these meetings has been to give the student emotional and social support.

It turns out that, despite all the constraints, there are some circumstances that are more enabling for gifted education at Karin's school. Throughout the school year in which the interviews were done, the school focused on differentiated teaching as a theme for collegial development through a series of workshops lead by an external educational consultant. In the second interview, Karin is a little more hopeful of the possibility of including the needs of gifted students in this new project, and she reminds her colleagues of how essential it is to keep them in mind whenever she finds the opportunity. At the same time, the school's change in approach means there it is no longer anyone's direct responsibility to follow up on the development of gifted students as they move between classes and through successive stages of education, for example. Karin says that she is aware of more students in need of challenges, but without her First Teacher mandate these students are out of her reach.

As mentioned in Chapter 4 on theory, Ball (1993) refers to enactment as dependent on *intertextual compatibility* with other policies valid at the time. In describing what to focus on, a teacher is more likely to find relevance in what they are doing if it is something they themselves believe in. Since the teachers in the national sample all agree on acknowledging gifted students, that is not the issue here. Rather the question is how other actors around them react to the adjustments they make. Did the teachers in the sample experience contesting views amongst colleagues concerning the policies to be prioritised? The responses to this question vary in the sample. As documented above, **Selma** and **Karin** experienced a negative attitude in relation to their First Teacher appointments and their teaching, while **Edith** and **Dagmar** experienced the opposite. The latter claim that colleagues, parents, and the students themselves see their focus on giftedness as something positive. For example, Edith says that the focus on giftedness establishes an expectation on the school to provide accordingly which "put demands on us to continue our work" (E3). **Hjalmar's** statement that his enrichment project has only been received in positive terms at his school and is seen as part of what makes it attractive confirms this positive conception of giftedness.

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<sup>64</sup> Mathematics 4 is the second but highest course available within the national school system included in only a narrow selection of upper secondary programmes.

## Summary and Analysis

Table 10:2 Enabling & Constraining Factors, National Education Teachers

Enabling Factors	Constraining Factors
Further training supported	Lack of specialized support
Responsibilities made official	Lack of legitimacy
Time allocation/salary supplement	Lack of time allocation
Coordinated timetables	Lack of coordination/progression
Collaborations staff & management	Lack of collaboration
Support in other than official sources	Lack of support in policy/official status
	Temporary investments

The data collected from the teachers in the National Education sample suggest that there are many roles played by teachers in enacting giftedness, such as, in teaching, school development projects, mentoring, supervision of colleagues and in developing cooperation within schools, between schools and between school and university. Enabling factors are financial support given to teachers in the form of investments in their training and making gifted students officially part of their teaching duties. It means time has been allocated to the teaching of these students and, to some extent, timetables have been adjusted to accommodating this teaching. In some examples, specific appointments have been made for the purpose, such as in **Selma** and **Dagmar** as First Teachers and of **Hjalmar** as in charge of the enrichment initiative at his school. As in the pilot study, collaboration takes place between teachers, between teachers and management, and between teachers and some members of the pastoral team.

At the same time, there are also examples in the interviews of factors constraining the provision for gifted students. Some National Education teachers find themselves in a situation without collaboration with other members of staff, without coordination of these activities, and without additional time given to support them in their work. Teacher's work regarding gifted students, while supported by general teaching staff, is rarely supported by staff specialised in giftedness. For example, the First Teachers' appointments may function as a significant actor in establishing and maintaining giftedness, but the positions are time-limited (see Chapter 5). Therefore, a constraint is naturally built into the structure – this can be seen in the interview with **Karin** and the dismantling of already established structures at her school. Moreover, since First Teacher is a local position without managerial status, it is still dependent on support by the Head of School through the appointment in the first place, and dependent on compliance of colleagues especially their willingness to be

directed in their work activities by someone who has equal or comparable status within the school. Such issues are visible in the resistance **Selma** has met in her work.

There is evidence of actors external to the school playing a part in gifted provision although this is mostly in the form of isolated instances rather than continuous collaboration. Nevertheless, there is little mention by the participants regarding support for their enactments in the form of policy documents by any of the central policy actors. Instead, judging by what is mentioned in the interviews this role is replaced by Mensa, Brainchild, an international university, NCM, an educational consultant, or self-studies - in the absence of policy teachers seek support from other sources. The most significant constraining factor seems to be a lack of continuity. This is an issue we will return to in the discussion at the end of Part 3.

## The IB Diploma Programme Teachers

Table 10:3 Background data: IBDP Teachers

Name	Level of Education	Subject	Size of School, Additional nb. of students	
Hedwig	Upper Secondary	Eco, ToK	1100 (75 IB)	
Lars	Upper Secondary	Psy, ToK,	1200 (150 IB)	Examiner
Moa	Upper Secondary	Psy, ToK, CAS	1400 (250 IB)	
Agnes	Upper Secondary	Ma, ToK	1500 (90 IB)	
Wilhelm	Upper Secondary	Eng, ToK, Civ (NC)	2000 (220 IB)	Examiner, WL, TX, ITE.

Abbreviations: Eco-Economics, ToK-Theory of Knowledge, Psy-Psychology, CAS-Creativity, Action, Service, Ma-Mathematics, Civ (NC) - Civics, National Curriculum. WL-workshop leader, TX-textbook author, ITE-International teaching experience.

### Teacher background and enabling factors

There are some differences between IB and national teachers when it comes to enabling factors in the form of resource allocation and collaboration. Firstly, all schools in the sample have offered the IBDP for more than 20 years. The IB teachers in the sample have therefore taken positions at well-established programmes and there is less responsibility on them to develop something new.

A major difference can be traced to the structure of the respective systems. In contrast to the decentralised structure of the national education system (Frostensson 2015, Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006), the IB runs a centralised coordinated content and assessment system under its own mission and policy documents with detailed syllabi and external standardised examinations. IB

teachers are supported not only by extensive policy documents but also considerable support in terms of educational philosophy and delivery. For example, in comparison to the Swedish national curriculum the IB policy documents include detailed instructions on what to teach, what the assessment tasks and standards are and what roles the teachers have in teaching and preparing the students for the exam (See Chapter 2). Furthermore, a significant aspect of the school accreditation to offer the IB programme is that all teachers, in addition to their formal teacher qualifications, are required to attend regular workshops to be certified to teach, and to continue to teach within the IB. Schools are obliged to finance such activities in order to keep their authorisation.

A third enabling factor is in the role of the IB coordinator who has overall responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of the IB programme at the school. There is some similarity to the First Teacher here in that the coordinator's role is also to drive development of the programme within the school and provide pedagogical leadership. In contrast to the First Teacher, the role of the coordinator is specified in written policy, stating it is a permanent position and collaboration between the teachers and the coordinator is non-negotiable giving them the "authority to plan and manage the process of change" (IB 2021:4). In short, the specification of assessment content and procedures, entitlement to further training, and the role of the coordinator explicitly stated in policy, enables IB teachers to act more as a mediator of already established principles rather than the originator of such principles. Less responsibility is placed on the individual teacher to build her or his own structures as part of their enactments. In the interviews, all the respondents report the experience of being supported by policy in such a way.

### Constraining factors and mixed responses

However, there is also evidence in the interviews that this centralised control and guidance by policy documents is constraining. **Wilhelm** regards the system as too detailed and too bureaucratic and downplays the autonomy of the individual teacher. **Moa** shares this view. Her experience of teaching Psychology leads her to regard some aspects of the course as being about 'teaching to the test', rather than teaching the subject, and allow very few possibilities of deviating from the structure. She says: "We feel the whip of the IB sometimes" (M1) and that "Sometimes we feel we have to choose, and then the examinations are winning for we want the students to do well" (M1).

Their enactment of IB policy is made somewhat more complex by the fact that all IB Programmes in Sweden are run in a national school setting where the IB is in minority. Judging by the figures presented in Table 10:2, IB students vary between 6 to 12 percent of the total student body, except for the school where Moa works where the IB represents 17 percent of the total student cohort. It was therefore of interest in the interviews whether this factor

played a part in teacher collaboration concerning the IBDP. In their responses, all five teachers describe collaborations taking place between teachers in the IB, both within and across subjects. In some cases, collaboration takes the form of networks including IB teachers at other schools, nationally or internationally. Some of the respondents also refer to official websites provided by the IB for collaborative purposes. Nevertheless, there were no examples of collaboration between the IBDP teachers and the teachers in national education, even on issues where collaboration could be beneficial, such as in exchanging ideas about teaching or assessments. At the same time, **Wilhelm**, points out that at his school the IB programme is well-integrated into the whole school structure and that the work done by IB teachers is recognised across the school. For example, English is used as a *lingua franca* between teachers across the school to allow non-Swedish teachers in the IB access to general conversations. Another example of the relationship between the programmes is that at **Moa's** school teachers are waiting for positions in the IB to become available, a situation she shares with **Hedwig**.

In contrast, **Agnes** claims she has “got the impression that the IB is not a favourite child” (Ag1). For example, when she first joined the IB she asked if any of her colleagues in the National Programmes were interested in doing the same. To her surprise the reply was: “No, why would I do that?” (Ag1). She suggests several reasons behind this response. One is that some of her colleagues were totally against the idea of final examinations and “thought that was inhumane in some cases” (Ag1). Another reason is the perception that IB teaching occupies “a lot of extra hours we don't have in the national programmes” (Ag1). In a similar manner, **Lars** mentions how teachers in the national programmes have difficulties in understanding why someone would even want to teach in the IB. He reports that there is an awareness within the school of who teaches in the IB and of the hard work it involves: “[the IB teachers] get noticed for how much work they put in [...] Most colleagues are frightened by the IB and they are sort of: ‘Thank God I don't have to be an IB teacher’” (L1). Even if such differences are known within the school, **Agnes'** school is the only one in the sample where the teachers receive additional time for their IB teaching duties. What is more, none of the teachers are offered any additional payments for their work. In the case of **Moa**, the IB teachers at her school even earn less than the national teachers since the former were excluded from a pay-rise campaign which concerned only teachers in the national programmes.

As we saw in Chapter 2, the IB system is regulated by other principles that may even contradict those of the national system. For example, instead of late differentiation it encourages specialisation, it has kept the final exam and the teachers are not encouraged to individualise teaching by adjusting according to the abilities or interests of the students (see Chapter 2). Consequently, IB teachers may be put in a situation that could be described not as *intertextual compatibility* but *intertextual incompatibility*. In Chapter 2, there were early

indications of this situation, for example, in the negative conception of the IB as being elitist. Furthermore, there has been an adjustment in how IBDP students are treated in applying Swedish universities. Previously they were treated as being part of an international quota. Since this was considered to challenge equity by giving the IB students an advantage, the admission system changed, in a way that, arguably, disadvantages IB students<sup>65</sup>. In the third and final interviews teachers were asked about the significance of this recalculation of grades. The majority responded that they do not perceive this in such negative terms as they did when the system first changed. The exception again is **Agnes** who regards it as being problematic since a great deal of content in the IB mathematics courses is not even taught in the Swedish system. The other teachers in the sample say instead that IB students have an advantage over national programme students because they are better prepared for university studies because of the more demanding nature of the IB course.

In addition, **Moa** says she has not noticed any indications of such an attitude of elitism even if her school advertises the IB by referring to IB students moving on to study at ivy league universities. **Hedwig** shares her experience but also confirms it was an issue 20 years ago when the IB was first introduced at her school. Instead, she says the fact that students want to work hard and to “get somewhere” (H3) is perceived as something positive. **Lars** on the other hand reflects on how it took him a few years to understand what the IB is about and claims it does not come as a surprise that some people can be “too hasty in drawing their conclusions” (L1), i.e. that the IB might come over as being elitist from the outside. **Wilhelm** expresses a similar view in describing the idea of the IB as elitist as “insular and parochial” (W1) and a “narrative trope” (W2). He develops his response by questioning what an expression of elitism then would be. Taking the relationship between the IB and universities as an example he claims that “the IB is now adequately, highly regarded in terms of the access it subsequently gives to university education” (W1). He argues from his experience of teaching the IB programme at international schools outside Sweden that such schools do inevitably build strong bonds with top universities, and continuously provide them with new students. On the other hand, he points out that such schools offer scholarships to “academically excellent” (W1) students from very limited backgrounds which gives them access to ‘ivy league’ education.

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<sup>65</sup> Before the autumn term 2000, out of the 45 points given as maximum in the IB exam, the range of 36 points and above was considered to be equal to the maximum points in the Swedish system. Today 43 to 45 IB points is what is required for conversion into the national maximum. Rather than a comparison of content and skills required, the conversion is based only on the percentage of student in the national Natural Science programme graduating with top marks. This means that on applying to university, the standards of the IB students’ qualification receives less recognition in Sweden than at some international universities, such as Oxford and Cambridge (Antagning 2021, Vlachos 2016, Böcker et al. 2016).

**Agnes** finally, identifies something of an elitist attitude on behalf of some of the IB students themselves which in her opinion creates an unnecessary distance between the students of the two education systems. At the same time, she sees it as the IB students are also met by negative expectations by students from the other programmes. Having been a student herself at the school where she now works, she describes it as follows:

AGNES: And I didn't go to the IB-programme because as a student in lower secondary school, we would only hear bad things about the IB-programme. Like, the people who go there, they are only people who want to show off, who believe they are better than everyone else. So, you kind of felt like if you would choose to do the IB you would have this stamp on you that you believed to be better than everyone else. And once I was at [name of school] as a student, I noticed how the IB students would keep to themselves. They would be this small group separated from the w-, from the rest of the school. And it feels like it is still that way even today (Ag1).

## Summary and Analysis

Table 10:4 Enabling & Constraining Factors, IBDP teachers

<b>Enabling Factors</b>	<b>Constraining Factors</b>
Support in Policy/official status	Constrained by policy
Coordinator as official/permanent	Lack of time allocation
Collaboration external/internal	Lack of salary supplement
External assessment/moderation	Lack of recognition
	Lack of coordination-transition

The IBDP teachers in the data play a different role in enacting challenging teaching practices than the National Education teacher, who try to establish something new and something without definite support in official policy. It is possible to argue that the IB write enabling factors into policy such as its authorization process and its certification of teachers. These include significant roles and resources for offering the programme. For example, a large part of the role of the IB teacher is to prepare the students for the final exam, which means their role is clearly focused on teaching rather than being responsible for programme implementation. Instead, IB teachers rely on the specially appointed coordinator for the implementation and continuity of the programme, and compliance to correct procedures. Interestingly, support by either Head of school or Pastoral team is not mentioned.

Thus, the amount of support in written policy means changes in staff does not jeopardize the continuation of the programme in the same way as in the examples in the sample of national teachers. Moreover, guidance is given on strategies for teaching and learning in the everyday classroom where providing a challenging education is the aim of the programme. A significant factor

enabling the teachers to maintain the high standards of the programme is also found in the final examination where standards are externally set and moderated. Therefore, such a component seems less dependent on the teachers' own interpretation of what education to offer, what to expect of a performance at a certain level.

Still, in the responses in the interviews there are constraining factors mentioned by the IB teachers. In common with the National Education teachers there are indications of a reluctance to recognise the differences between the systems, and the implications in terms of resource allocation, for example, by denying teachers compensation for the increased amount of work they do. One additional aspect concerns the transition between the IB and the national education system resulting in a recalculation of the IB students' grades. However, in the teachers' interpretations this does not seem to affect their work in any major way. In sum, it seems like the IB maintains its own structure parallel to national education, apart from where they must coincide. The presumption then is that the IB must conform to the standards of national education.

## The Peak Programme Teachers

Table 10:5 Background data: The Peak Programme Teachers

Name	Level of Education	Subjects	Size of School nb. of Students	Additional
August	Upper Secondary	Phy, MaNC	450 (60 Peak)	PhD, Lector
Viktor	Upper Secondary	Hi, SweNC	450 (90 in Peak)	First Teacher
Tove	Upper Secondary	Musical Instrument	75, all in Peak	Professional musician
Pär	Upper Secondary	Musical Instrument		Participation terminated

Abbreviations: Phy-Pysics, MaNC-Mathematics, National Curriculum, Hi-History, SweNC-Swedish, National Curriculum.

### Teacher background and enabling factors

As described in Chapter 2, the Peak Programme has been part of the national education system since 2009. The structure of the programme means it is regulated by the same curriculum as the regular national programmes at upper secondary level but follows its own syllabi for a selection of courses.

The first of the teachers in the Peak sample is **August**, who teaches at a school offering Peak in the Natural Science Programme. To support him in his teaching, he refers to his PhD in physics. This also makes him a lector which means that like the First Teachers he is entitled to a salary supplement, and he has a slight release from other subject specific commitments. At the time of the interviews, out of the 2500 credits included in any completed degree at

upper secondary school 200 credits are allocated to specific Peak courses. August explains, when the school first started the aim was to build a programme relying on old principles for classical learning.

AUGUST: [T]he first years it was a very ambitious programme [---]. What it consisted of was all enrichment courses, all specialized courses, the local courses we ran in mathematics and the natural sciences were all compulsory in our Science Programme, and in addition, the plan was that the students would enrol in a course at university. That turned out to be far too demanding for the students, and not many had the energy to persist. In connection to the reform in 2011 we took the opportunity to make some radical changes in the structure of the programme. What separates our science programme from our regular Natural Science Programme is that it has more electives [...] and it is compulsory to study one of our specialized courses, in Natural Sciences or Mathematics (Aug1).

August mentions a few advantages in making these changes. One of them is that students can study in mixed groups with regular students if the numbers of applicants are not enough to fill a whole Peak class. Such a compromise is necessary also due to limited slots in the timetable, limited number of Peak teachers, and limited access to classrooms. However, to keep to the standard of the Peak Programme when teaching mixed classes, August says he makes a priority for the Peak students and that “The general science programme has more or less had to adapt to the tempo of the Peak Science” (Aug1).

The second teacher in the Peak sample is **Viktor** who teaches history in a Peak Programme focused on the humanities. He is also appointed as a First Teacher. Like the First Teachers in the national sample, he is entitled to a salary supplement, but his appointment is neither primarily connected to teaching the Peak Programme, nor meant to spread ideas and teaching practices of the Peak Programme to the teaching staff as a whole. Instead, he describes it as the responsibility for keeping his colleagues up to date with pedagogical research in assembly meetings on a few occasions per year. An example of issues discussed by the First Teachers is the 2018 report by the School Inspection concerning high-performing students. This is the same document as referred to in Chapter 9 of the text analysis and makes it the only reference to the Inspection documents in the complete set of interviews.

Even if **August** and **Viktor** work at the same school, the internal structure of the Peak Programme in the humanities is different from the Sciences since 400 credits out of the total 2500 are Peak courses. In addition, in cooperation with a university a 7,5 credits university course is offered to the Peak students in humanities which they share with regular university students<sup>66</sup>. To reduce complications in the students having to commute between their school and the

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<sup>66</sup> One term full time studying at university level in Sweden is equal to 30 credits.

university, lectures are compressed to a few full day commitments spread out over a term, which reduces the amount of commuting the students need to do.

When asked about whether they had encountered any attitudinal constraints for example those connected with charges of elitism, Viktor or August give the following interesting responses. **Viktor** expresses that the school actually reverses the question; high aims are part of the school identity. He says: “It is in our DNA” and that “the school was founded on an elitist aim, without in any way confusing intellectual and economic elitism” (V3). Rather than interpreting elitism as a political issue concerning segregation, class difference and “white-flight” (V3), the school explicitly focuses on attracting motivated students, and aims to “allow the students to invest in reaching high achievements” (V3).

**August** takes a slightly different view and admits to some cases of a negative attitude amongst colleagues when the programme first started. Even if it has been in the form of more subtle comments, he has encountered questions regarding investment in high achievement instead of a focus on students in difficulties. At the same time, the Peak Programme receives less funding than the regular science programme at the school, according to August. Another attitudinal aspect is in students being reluctant to choose the Peak Programme since they do not want to be associated with what it stands for, in August words “to be placed together with a gang of nerds” (Aug1). However, in the classes where students in Peak and non-Peak are placed together the barrier disappears once students get to know each other, and the non-Peak students then want to transfer to Peak. The reason behind the negative attitude from the beginning August refers to the ‘law of Jante’ and sees his responsibility in challenging such a conception.<sup>67</sup>

The last teacher in the Peak sample, **Tove**, represents the school that is the furthest on a scale of specialized challenging education, when she teaches a musical instrument in an aesthetic Peak Programme. 1350 credits out of the total of 2500 are focused on music, distributed between individual lessons, ensemble playing, orchestra, musical theory, music history, improvisation, and composition. The school has developed external collaboration through master classes with professional musicians and cooperates with professional orchestras. The cooperation comes about through personal contacts, for example, through some teachers’ former networks as professional musicians, but also through former students and their current connections to teachers at conservatory level. The programme structure does not mean all students have the

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<sup>67</sup> The law of Jante is present in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries and refers to the idea that it is presumptuous to claim oneself to be better at something than anyone else. See also the expression ‘to cut down the tall poppies’ in Peeters, B (2004) Tall poppies and egalitarianism in Australian discourse: From Keyword to Cultural Value. *English World-Wide*, Volume 25, Issue 1, Jan 2004, p. 1 – 25.

same timetable. Instead, it is individualised according to instrument, taking into consideration that a “singer for example, cannot practice for as many hours as a pianist or a violinist” (T1). The school asks the students to specialise and even if it is common that the students who are admitted to the school have abilities in several instruments, they must choose which instrument will be their main instrument and focus on that. According to Tove, this specialisation is essential in becoming a skilful musician.

On browsing the school webpage in preparation for the interview, it becomes clear that many of the teachers, like Tove, have a background as professional musicians in Sweden and abroad. The musical profile is equal to the school as a whole. As with the situations of **August** and **Viktor**, there is no need to make compromises between the Peak and non-Peak students. However, **Tove** strives to be realistic about students’ prospects in the highly competitive world of professional music and finds herself sometimes advising students about other possible career paths, since despite having talent and devotion all students will not make it. She says: “of course they continue to be allowed to try but need to be aware of alternatives” (T1). To her students, Tove emphasises the importance to keep in phase with their general subject studies since in addition to contributing to their “holistic” development, it gives them alternative career paths. Inevitably, during the three years the students spend at the school, some students come to realise they do not want a life devoted to music. According to Tove this does not affect the way she teaches. She says: “It is a matter of being perceptive and it is equally interesting working with those students as the ones who move on to apply to conservatory. But they must be willing to learn” (T1).

Since the school is focused on music and on developing the students’ ability towards excellence it is not surprising that the Head of School supports such work and that the staff of the school work together towards fulfilling such a goal. Therefore, collaboration involves the whole school and according to Tove there are no signs of resistance and accusation of elitism. On the other hand, she admits that some of the music schools in the area are unhappy about losing their best students when they are admitted into the Peak Programme. Because the students devote so much time to practicing their instruments, they very soon develop far beyond the level of other students of the same age. One way to approach this dissatisfaction has been to offer additional lessons to students external to the school as a type of enrichment, which means more students benefit from the high standards of teaching offered by the school.

### Constraining factors and mixed responses

Due to the exception made in *The Higher Education Ordinance* (SFS 1993:100 Ch. 7:3§) the students in Peak can bypass entry requirements and enrol in university courses before having formally graduated from upper sec-

ondary level. August refers to this aspect of the Peak Programme as a possibility but adds: “In practice, very few of our students chose to do so” (Aug1). The reasons, according to **August**, are essentially practical. It is difficult to commute to the university in the middle of a school day and once these students enter a full university programme they are left with an empty slot in their study timetable for the course that they have already taken. He says: “None of the universities were willing to produce a course tailor made for the Peak students only” (Aug1). A little later in our first interview, he returns to this aspect of the programme where he says: “[T]hey’re smart, smart kids, they’re tactical, a lot of them. Why do something they don’t get any cred for at a later stage” (Aug1). However, in the second of our interviews, he mentions how four students have declared an interest in taking on university studies in the year following, meaning the possibility to do so will be accessed.

There are forces at work here towards conformity to the standard curriculum and downplaying the special nature of the Peak programme. This can be seen, for example, in the requirement for entry into the Peak Programme. To be accepted, the school relies only on grades from the previous level of education. Using the first course in mathematics as an example, August claims most students would pass the course before it has even started since “80 percent or so [is] repetition from mathematics at lower secondary level” (Aug1). August refers to financial constraints preventing offering additional courses to those in the standard curriculum. The Peak programme, although offering somewhat more advanced and more complex content, still involves the same grading criteria as the regular programme and contributes the same to the final grade. There is little in the grading system on its own to encourage students to invest in the more advanced programme.

This point is further reinforced in the interview with **Viktor**. There is the possibility of earning *merit points* in Swedish upper secondary school, instigated as an attempt to encourage students to take their studies in some of their elective courses to a higher level of difficulty instead of taking on new subjects at a lower level (*Antagning*). According to Viktor, these merit points are not given for the Peak courses. This means that for students applying to university there is no distinction made between those who have graduated from regular programmes and those who have graduated from the Peak Programme.

A constraining factor which affects all three teachers in this part of the sample is that the Peak Programmes are not yet made a permanent part of the education system. While **Tove** does not appear constrained by this fact, **Viktor** expresses some concern. He states that to be made permanent is dependent on a political majority being in favour of such a decision. Moreover, he thinks that one of the main components of the Peak Programme - the acceleration to higher stages of education - needs looking into. “I think it is one of the things that will be shaped up, because it, sort of, it can’t be this loose, it’s sort of a bit willy-nilly” (V1). A little later in the interview he says: “The

last admittance according to the system, the experimental system that now exist, is in 2021 which is next year. So, I mean, they must make up their minds, by 2022 it has to be finally decided” (V1). If they do not, Viktor sees ‘them’, meaning SNAE to be “totally reckless” (V1)<sup>68</sup>.

## Summary and Analysis

Table 10:6 Enabling & Constraining Factors, Peak Programme Teachers

Enabling Factors	Constraining Factors
Support in policy	Non-permanent educational option
Official status	Reluctance to apply
Collaboration external	Lack in recognition of progression
Collaboration internal	

In interpreting the data, enabling factors concerning the Peak teachers’ enactments are found in written policy. The goal of the programme is stated as to offer a more challenging education, including both acceleration and enrichments, and to increase motivation and optimal development for “the ones who want to reach further” in accordance with their capacity (SFS 2008:793). All three teachers in the sample state how their work is confirmed by their management, and they have had very few experiences of being accused of elitism. At the same time, the Peak Programme is an example of an incentive in Swedish education which is not made permanent. Judging by the number of times such a decision has been postponed there seems to be a reluctance on the behalf of government to do so. Therefore, even if the programmes are well-established in their respective schools, a constraining factor mentioned is the uncertainty of their long-term continuation.

Another constraining factor mentioned by **August**, and to some extent **Viktor**, is that students might choose away from the programme if they are presented with too much of a challenge. According to August, this could result in their programme being terminated, as has been the case in Peak Programmes at other schools, he claims. This is confirmed by his statement that there are students suitable for the Peak Programme in the school, but they might be afraid of choosing it. Instead, they choose to study the regular programme, which results in good grades with less effort, possibly at the cost of underperforming. However, since some classes consist of a mixture of Peak students and non-peak students these students are taught in accordance with

<sup>68</sup> Since the interview, the trial period of the Peak Programmes has been extended a third time until 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2024. This means the Programme will have been a part of the education system for a total of 15 years without becoming part of its permanent structures.

Peak incentives. There are two implications here. Firstly, instead of adjusting all teaching by lowering standards, the baseline is set at a high standard. Secondly, all these students are taught in line with Peak Programme content and methods but without being registered as Peak students. The way to bridge the gap between regular and Peak Programme students, therefore, is by becoming more inclusive and involving more students but possibly at the cost of lack of recognition as Peak students.

A final constraining factor is the fact that merit points are not given to the students studying the Peak Programme, meaning their studies have the same value when applying to university as the regular courses. This policy has the result then that teaching is differentiated in terms of content but not in the value of its outcome. In this sense, the aesthetic Peak Programme is again in a different position where resources are put into educating the students to a level of excellence without being constrained in the same way.

## Conclusion

The three samples of teachers exemplify several different teaching enactments in which students, including those categorised as gifted, may be challenged. The teachers in the samples jointly exemplify in what way this is possible. In all cases, resources have been allocated to do so. In the sample, the teachers' enactments include training and support to colleagues, conversations, meetings, events, and the production of planning documents, but also the borrowing of ideas and practices from other parties. In comparing the results to those in the survey, collaboration with management and the pastoral team is mentioned by the National Education teachers, but not by the IB and the Peak teachers.

In establishing something new, the teachers in the National Education sample establish structures to support them in their work. In that respect, the teachers in the IBDP and the teachers in the Peak Programme samples are in a different situation since their enactments are based on already established structures in their policy documents. Thus, the two latter groups of teachers play the role of maintaining structures rather than establishing new ones. However, this phase also includes elements sensitive to disruption since even well-established policy structures can lose their impact or be constrained. We will return to the latter point in the discussion in Chapter 13.

A common constraint identified in the sample as a whole is an expectation, regarding conformity or a force acting on initiatives helpful to gifted students to bring them back in line with the regular curriculum. For example, the IB teachers experience little recognition of the high standards they need to maintain. In the Peak Programme this manifests itself in the uncertainties surrounding the infrastructure for making acceleration possible, and the difficulties in

adjusting to student ability on entry to the Peak Programme and those surrounding passing on these same students to university, according to **August**. In contrast, **Hjalmar** from the national sample, has such a system in place, realised by his Head of School. This indicates that personal contacts might be more relevant here than what is stated in policy documents. Based on the evidence of **August** and **Viktor** the Peak Programme could be seen as a hybrid positioned midway between a non-differentiating national system and a system dedicated to a specialised challenging education. In this sense, the aesthetic Peak Programme is in a different position where a great number of enabling resources are devoted to educating excellence and allowing students to pass on to further studies at conservatories and to lives as professional musicians. The teaching strategies enacted to do this will be presented in the next chapter.



# Chapter 11: Giftedness Enacted in Teaching

Having investigated the teachers' backgrounds and how resources are allocated in general terms in their schools, this chapter focuses specifically on the teaching aspects of the enactment of giftedness. This section of the interviews concerns the aspects of lesson content and methods that are designed to challenge the student.

In the pilot survey, acceleration was the most common educational strategy regarding the student categorised as gifted. This should be understood as the student being allowed or encouraged to work at a faster pace. The second most common strategy was the use of learning materials designed for older students. The two most common teaching strategies consisted in allowing such students to work independently and on different materials to the rest of the class within the ordinary classroom, or to be taught individually by another person out of class. The most commonly occurring special provision took place at a smaller scale, such as adjustments made by the teacher within the individual classroom. There was a near absence of larger scale provisions requiring different or novel infrastructural solutions beyond the classroom such as appointing specialist mentors, making time tabling adjustments, allowing curriculum compacting, incorporating studies at university level, or a use of weekends and holidays for enrichment type activities. In total, the responses gave a picture where extra educational provisions were limited in number and variety and applied a limited amount of the time. For example, responses to one of the survey questions suggested that these students may have access to teaching adjusted to their ability for less than 10% of the total amount of time spent in the classroom per week.

## The National Education Teachers

### Strategies, organisation, and content

In the first sample of teachers, examples are found of several different teaching strategies. In some cases, these are limited to a few students, in other cases they apply to more. One of the most extensive applications is in the school where **Edith** works and where the whole school is involved in differentiated teaching, a strategy fitting well with the ideas of Tomlinson (1996; see Chapter 3). Typically, Edith organises her lessons around a core or theme, in which

all students participate. This is followed by students working individually according to different levels of difficulty and complexity, for example, by the support of textbooks for older students. To avoid groups becoming static, all levels are open for everyone to choose, meaning the students self-select the level they want to work at. The naming of the groups avoids an implicit hierarchy and refers to difference in speed such as: ‘walking’, ‘jogging’, and ‘running’. To maintain the level within the groups, students who find it difficult to keep up are recommended to change to a slower group, something they do not see as a failure, according to Edith. Conversely, students who tend to choose below their ability are encouraged to try more demanding exercises.

**Dagmar’s** school also addresses multiple students in its teaching strategies. For example, setting is applied in mathematics for all students from Year 6 to Year 9. Students are allowed to choose (and switch) between four different levels for a trial period before they are asked to put in a request to belong to a particular group, similar to the system at Edith’s school. Teachers may then recommend some students to choose differently. These choices are not for all time and are regularly re-evaluated avoiding stagnation. All groups share the same homework, do the same tests, and are assessed according to the same criteria. In the group described as the slowest working, the students are taught by a special educationalist who works on more concrete material, while the group at the other end goes faster, uses more enriching material, works on additional projects and receives more exercises in problem solving. There is also more participation in competitions from the latter group. Dagmar gives details of how she uses one-to-one mentoring and how she includes group tutorials of 15 minutes during regular classes. She individualises teaching using materials divided according to three levels of complexity, and she makes use of peer-teaching, for example, where gifted students are given the responsibility to teach computer programming to groups of younger students.

The school also applies different forms of acceleration. For example, in Swedish **Selma** uses textbooks designed for students who are two years ahead of their biological age. **Dagmar** mentions three students “referred” (D1) to as gifted, and who do an enrichment project in science with a class two years above their age. A Year 5 student, age 11, is placed in the fastest group in Year 7 (13-year-olds) in mathematics and twice-a-week joins Year 7 also in Swedish. Perhaps the most remarkable example is the 10-year-old boy who is involved in a course in physics at university. There is clear evidence that this school manages to take into consideration the abilities of even the youngest students, for example, a first-year student has already been accelerated in mathematics. In addition, Dagmar identified twelve students from Year 1 and 2, (7–8-year-olds) who achieved a high score on a succession of diagnostic tests. One of them “has been referred as gifted” (D1) by a psychologist. To challenge them further, Dagmar has formed two enrichment groups that she meets for 60 minutes per week. She also mentions competitions by referring to NCM at Gothenburg University and to material in computer programming.

There are other examples of acceleration in the same sample. **Karin** describes a student who in Year 6 (12-year-old) completed the course in mathematics for Year 9 (15-year-olds). To allow him to progress, he has been partially accelerated, which means he remains in Year 9 in addition to being enrolled in Mathematics 4 and then further on to Mathematics 5 at upper secondary level (normally taught to 18- to 19-year-olds). For one lesson per week, he joins a class at an upper secondary school, while for the rest of the time, he remains in his ordinary class but works on his own in his textbook. This means the student will have completed all the courses in mathematics available in the school system before he has started upper secondary school. The following year, Karin says this will be solved by the student becoming a full-time student at the same upper secondary school where he is currently being taught. He will then be accelerated further to university studies in mathematics. A second student in Karin's class is also accelerated but only by one year. This means he remains in her Year 9 class but works on his own on material for Year 1 at upper secondary school.

As we can see, acceleration is a common factor in these teaching strategies. Rogers (2007) and Tomlinson (1996) point out that, in itself without the corresponding adjustments in context, an increase in pace or the use of materials for older students might not offer the required challenges. Instead, more exploratory tasks suitable for more creative, independent thinking can be found in the use of problem-solving exercises where methods might not be given beforehand and students themselves need to work out what tools they need (Tomlinson 1996). In the interviews such tasks show up in the form of competitions and problem-solving exercises in mathematics constructed by NCM at Gothenburg University. Karin uses these to challenge the students and to involve the accelerated students and the rest of the class in the same exercises. Additionally, Karin provides her students with mathematical tasks from upper secondary school vocational programmes, which she claims allow the students to apply mathematics in a practical context.

**Selma** does something similar in Swedish when she sets the students to solve what she calls 'cognitive conflicts' inspired by James Nottingham. She explains it means the students are confronted by issues in for example a piece of fiction where contradictory actions can both be judged as the right thing to do, depending on interpretation. This allows the students to perceive problems from different perspectives and to practice their skills in formulating and analysing arguments. Previously Selma ran an enrichment group targeting skills in writing, design, and organisation. The group was made responsible for the school magazine which meant they were in charge of all elements involved in the production process, including organisational elements and interviewing, writing and editing. The project was run by the students while Selma's role was to give feedback on their texts. In a similar manner, Selma repeatedly emphasizes the importance of offering the students tasks which are open for the students' full range of skills, rather than limiting their performance.

In the final descriptions in the national sample, **Hjalmar's** enrichment group in mathematics is an example where explorative aspects of the subject are in the core of his teaching. Hjalmar describes the aim of the project as giving the students the chance "to meet other young people interested in Mathematics" (Hj1). "The hope is that it will cause a chain reaction to start, to catch the ones who are a bit gifted in mathematics, and that they will continue to move upwards within the education system" (Hj1). The teaching includes two hours per week of acceleration and enrichment activities. He emphasises the enriching elements rather than acceleration because he discerns a tendency for students to work at an incredibly high speed but perhaps lacking depth of understanding. The classes usually start with an introduction of a mathematical problem, either something brought up by the students, or something initiated by Hjalmar, such as some historical or philosophical explorations into mathematics. The class will then include working on problem solving exercises, logical puzzles, and lectures about specific mathematical problems, or people from the history of mathematics. For example, he has included computer programming based on the Turing machine.

According to Hjalmar, sometimes the students work on aspects of mathematics they normally would not meet until university. Since Hjalmar does not follow a textbook or a syllabus he can pick and choose the aspects of the subject he can draw upon in his enrichment work. Judging from his descriptions, Hjalmar has the ability to guide the students in their widely spread explorations and provide them with the methods they need, rather than the other way around: first providing a method and then a number of exercises where it should be applied and perfected. Reflecting on his explorative approach he says: "Really, we are a bit like the Pythagoreans in our Math's sessions" (Hj2). He thinks that students do not get enough of these more explorative and philosophical aspects of the subject in their regular courses, where "it's more like, keeping to the textbook and do your exercises, don't even think about what number 5 is" (Hj2). In summary, he describes himself as not expecting the students to come up with solutions it has taken skilful mathematicians hundreds of years to solve. At the same time, he addresses aspects of critical thinking in his course where he moves away from thoughtlessly 'doing mathematics' and instead investigates the foundations of 'the doing', such as some of its axioms.

### Attitudinal aspects

As part of enacting their teaching strategies, the teachers in the interviews mention having to develop attitudinal aspects of their teaching practices. **Edith** mentions the importance of being open about differences in learning instead of denying them "as if we live in some sort of bubble where all students are the same" (E3). Therefore, an important aspect of her teaching is to confirm students' difference in ability, and that even if some are ahead, they

all have things to learn. According to Edith, it is not hard to get her students to accept such an attitude. For example, she claims the students do not find it strange if someone who can read is offered a different book than those who are just learning the letters of the alphabet. According to Edith, the attitude that this is a problem originates in adults rather than children and it is they who promote “the law of Jante where you are not supposed to be better than anyone else” (E3). She states, her students have become accustomed to this way of working and see it as normal.

On the same lines, for **Selma** leaving students to do their work outside the classroom in the corridor or in rooms adjacent to the classroom beyond the attention of the teacher is not what is meant by inclusion. The main principle underlying her work is teacher flexibility, allowing students to try things out, allowing them to be different, and allowing them to perform at a high level. In her interview this is framed as a matter of placing expectations on all students including those identified as gifted. Selma also mentions the need to work on students’ attitudes in terms of accepting differences. For example, she received comments about her enrichment group from other students regarding “her expert students” (S1). She made it very clear that she does not accept such a way of talking. **Karin** describes a similar situation where other students have referred to her four-year accelerated student in a negative sense as “super smart” (K1). Karin has then confirmed the student’s fast learning ability and that he “enjoys maths” and “finds it easy” but at the same time emphasised his and the other students equal value. The situation she describes as a “dilemma”:

KARIN: ...when you are not allowed to say that someone has a very developed ability, I find it very hard not to say so. I have to say it, otherwise it is as if indirectly saying someone is of a higher value [...] There’s a lot of that and I am working against it, a great deal. It’s got nothing to do with it, some people just find it easier than others, that’s just the way it is (K1).

Karin links this type of attitude also to the perspective of elitism where she has experienced how some of her colleagues question the level of her accelerated student’s intelligence by being patronising, something Karin describes as “the most difficult aspects of her work” (K3). According to her description, these teachers motivate their scepticism by pointing to parents who claim that their children are “so clever”, or to a lack in performance in certain subjects implying that a student is only gifted if he or she is equally high performing in all areas. In the last of our interviews, Karin says: “that’s not what it’s about. It is about needing challenges and having other abilities” but at the same time being equal in value (K3).

## Summary and Analysis

The teachers in the National Education sample enact several different strategies in their teaching to provide their students with more challenges. In the pilot study, acceleration was the most common adjustment while the multiple interviews provide a greater variety of approaches. Here we find enrichment activities, ability grouping and participation in competitions. Still, acceleration by alteration in pace is a common denominator usually in the form of offering material constructed for older students. In contrast, **Hjalmar**'s enrichment activities are based more on developing the students' curiosity and thinking than providing age-defined material.

It is also apparent from the data how the teachers see a part of their role to consist not only in focusing on actual teaching adjustments but also addressing misconceptions on behalf of other parties. Teachers who apply ability grouping do so without organising the students in terms of hierarchical structure. Furthermore, **Selma** rejects the assumption that gifted students can work independently of the teacher as she emphasises inclusion of all students, both physically in the classroom and in terms of expectations on their performance. She also rejects other students' belittling ironic categorisation of the students in her enrichment group as 'experts'. From the start of their school experience, **Edith**, who teaches the youngest students, acknowledges difference in students' ability, but not in value. To maintain a sense of equity both in **Dagmar**'s ability groups and in **Edith**'s differentiated teaching, the students self-select what level they want to work at, as a way to avoid a sense of externally imposed differentiation but at the same time offer more than one level of teaching. Similarly, **Dagmar**, **Edith**, and **Hjalmar** clarify the importance of avoiding lowering the demands of the most challenging level of teaching to suit more students but make it clear that once choices have been made, the students will have to adjust to that level of teaching.

# The IB Diploma Programme Teachers



Figure 1  
The Diploma Programme model

Figure 11:1 The IB Diploma Programme Model  
(IB 2015b:5<sup>69</sup>)

## Strategies, organisation, and content

The structure of the IBDP means the students study six subjects during their two-year Diploma Programme. In addition, the students take a 100-hour course in critical thinking about knowledge (Theory of Knowledge - ToK), a 150-hour course for personal development (Creativity Activity Service - CAS) and they write an Extended Essay (EE) of 4,000 words in which they practice their skills in academic writing and research skills (IB 2015a). Once students have chosen their 3 higher-level and 3 standard-level subjects, neither the teacher nor the students have any influence over the course requirements, which are set centrally by the IB organisation, which means no further adjustments are made for example according to students' interest or difficulties. Instead, as discussed in Chapter 2 of the thesis, students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and to develop strategies to overcome any difficulties they may encounter.

Early in the interviews, a common denominator in the descriptions by the respondents is that the IB Programme is characterised by a high level of content and skills. This is evidenced by, for example, **Lars** who mentions the amount of time he spent on preparation when he first started to teach in the IB. Despite then having been a teacher for ten years, he remembers how he worked every day “until 10 o'clock”, “all holidays, Christmas, New Year's Eve, almost every day for at least half a year” and that “[I]t was such a massive load to learn” (L1). When he is asked to clarify in what way, he partially refers to linguistic reasons since the course is taught in English which is not his first language, but he also states:

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<sup>69</sup> Reprinted with permission.

LARS: When I teach the IB Psychology course, I have the feeling I'm teaching everything I learnt at university, and even more actually, to those students. And I've heard from the students who've gone on to study Psychology at university, they recognize a lot from their studies. It's almost like a university course, you might say (L1).

When **Agnes** is asked whether she can relate to the claim in research that the IB is a challenging programme, her immediate response is “Actually yes, completely” (Ag1). She too mentions the time required to get through the extensive content but also that “it requires a lot of the students” (Ag1) since the whole of the two years of studying must be kept in mind for the final exam. She points out that the core of the curriculum requires the students to “do a lot of their own thinking” (Ag1). One example here is in the *Internal Assessment* component<sup>70</sup>. For example, in Psychology the students are required to design and carry out their own experiment, collect data, analyse it statistically, come to conclusions, but also critique their own findings. **Moa** explains:

MOA: It really prepares them and just gives them a completely different perspective of what it means to be a researcher, which will also help them when they analyse other peoples' research, what *they* have done. And they also have to evaluate their own experiments as well, strengths and limitations and what they could have, if they could modify it if they had done it again (M1).

According to **Wilhelm**, the IB education offers “the opportunity to think critically about things” (W1). A course contributing to this aspect is the ToK course which is also connected to the APL-thinking skills (Figure 2:4). One way to understand the structure of ToK is to think of it as a 100-hour enrichment course obligatory for all students. In the course guide, ToK is described as: “challenging and thought-provoking”, and with the aim to “deepen [the students'] understanding, as well as facilitating the transfer of their learning to new and different contexts. The ToK course embraces the exploration of tensions, limitations and challenges relating to knowledge and knowing” (IB 2020:5-6). In more concrete terms, the course aims to make students question on what foundation something becomes knowledge, rather than being merely belief or hearsay.

A common denominator between the teachers in the IB sample is that all five teach ToK and in all their descriptions of their teaching, discussions based on second order questions<sup>71</sup> are a main part of their teaching in ToK. As the interviews are set during the second and third school term affected by the

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<sup>70</sup> The Internal Assessment is an enrichments type of component in each of the students' six subjects where they are asked to go deeper into a specific aspect in the syllabus, commonly presented in the form of an essay or a report which is internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated.

<sup>71</sup> Questions not about the world but about knowledge about the world.

Covid pandemic, it is not surprising that student work was linked to the pandemic such as considering the question ‘To what extent can models be used to make predictions?’ and ‘What makes a fact a fact?’ **Agnes** uses a strategy to connect mathematics to aesthetics through the Fibonacci sequence and the limit of successive terms - the golden ratio - found in paintings and architecture, as well as the Mandelbrot set. Her classes include a musical composition made from Pi, her students created a sculpture to visualise infinity, and performed a dance representing geometry. Exercises like this may seem to be entertaining but **Wilhelm** explains these creative aspects of the ToK course further. He claims even if a lesson might start with something seemingly simple it is the task of the teacher to make sure the lesson is not about aimlessly discussing something, but to question much deeper aspects of knowledge as the course has the same rigour as other subjects.

### Attitudinal aspects

According to **Wilhelm**, students are “under-prepared to tolerate uncertainty” (W2) which is one of the main challenges the teachers in ToK aim to address. What he means is that the students tend to hold on to certainty in a way that makes them dogmatic. On the other hand, they can also avoid taking a stand on something which instead make them victims of relativism, claiming nothing can be known for certain. The ToK course aims to question both approaches to knowledge, which according to **Lars** some students find frustrating. **Agnes** gives an example of this reaction. One student who performed at a very high level of skill in mathematics “a fantastic student” (Ag2) turned out to be unwilling to question any fundament mathematics rests on. He “completely shut down” (Ag2), would not engage in conversation and discussions because he claimed: “Mathematics is what it is, and that’s the end of story” (Ag2). On the other hand, there were cases of the opposite reaction, another student claiming he would have loved mathematics if it was like in ToK all the time. **Wilhelm** sees the role of the teacher to be persistent. To challenge in an open-ended manner, teachers need to be prepared to be questioners and not the source of knowledge who has all the answers, which according to **Agnes** some teachers find challenging. **Wilhelm** develops this further by stating that the role of the teacher in teaching ToK is to “resist becoming an interlocutor” (W2) and not to give answers, but to structure discussions and by asking questions to make the students think, something described by **Hedwig** as “the greatest challenge a teacher works with” (He2).

A last aspect of the IB teachers’ examples of how the students are challenged is exemplified by the teaching of CAS which stands for *Creativity, Activity, Service*. The aim of the course is to encourage the students to develop a new skill, to maintain physical and other activities and to devote time to community service. **Moa** develops her perception of the significance of CAS further:

MOA: [...] They get to do so much more in the subjects and the subjects are, yes, it requires so much more. Also, the lay-out for the IB, that also they should develop as, I mean as a person. They should be challenged, not only academically, but also socially, they should take more responsibility, show initiative for things. They do that for CAS, but also in the subject we have more stricter deadlines, it has to be handed in on time otherwise there will be consequences there. I think they also, they are forced to take much more responsibility and then, when you do that, when you give that to students, from my perspective they, they grow with that, they can take that responsibility, as well. So, it is a more demanding programme, for sure (M1).

## Summary and Analysis

In the data collected from the IB sample, examples are given of how acceleration, ability grouping, and enrichment are part of the programme structure, which means that teachers do not have to invent these aspects and provide content themselves. Instead, the role of the teachers is to enact defined subject content and skills and to prepare the students for their final examinations. As discussed in Chapter 2, this does not include making any adjustments according to the students' interests or difficulties. Moreover, since a defined and precise content needs to be taught according to specific deadlines, it provides a timeline for teaching and the expectation is that students should keep up rather than pacing the teaching to the slower members of the class.

As a consequence, there are high expectations regarding student performance and the requirement that they take responsibility for their learning. Enabling possibilities for providing challenges can be found in the teachers' descriptions of the core components of the IBDP. The ToK course challenges students' critical thinking skills, in CAS they have the opportunity to work on their personal development through taking on social commitments and initiating projects. Independent work, organisation, and research skills are developed through the Extended Essay and Internal Assessment components in the 6 subjects, activities that are integrated in the core structure of the programme. These demanding activities are not something to be done by a small group in parallel with the rest of the class but rather as fully integrated into the whole curriculum and required to be undertaken by all.

## The Peak Programme Teachers

### Strategies, organisation, and content

As mentioned in the previous chapter, **Tove's** school embraces a philosophy in which students have access to several accelerating and enriching alternatives. The alternatives are distributed between individual and group lessons

and tutorials, between theoretical and practical components, between historical knowledge and new improvisation. In addition, students are offered masterclasses and cooperation with professional musicians and orchestras, and they can participate in competitions. Responsibilities in orchestras and ensembles are distributed in such a way that more able students are given leadership roles and responsibilities for solos. However, these roles are rotated, and players also have to expect to perform regular supporting ensemble roles as well. Using such strategies means ability grouping is included in teaching at the same time as the students learn how to cooperate and create music together.

In our second interview, **August** continues to develop the description of his teaching strategies in teaching physics in the Peak Programme. He says the most common question he asks the students is “But why?” (Aug2) which he describes as requiring the students to reason rather than to respond, and to question the fundamental principles in his subject, rather than accepting them. From the way he describes his teaching he is not just guided by teaching the students about laws of physics, and how they came to be accepted, but also by what such laws can say about new discoveries, and what their limitations of the laws might be. He explains:

AUGUST: That’s what makes it exciting [...] Where the forefront of research in physics is at the moment, this thing about dark energy and dark matter and such, where you may have data that can’t fully be explained. There are plenty of hypotheses and things, but this is where, we’re out on a wobble [...] That’s what we talk a lot about (Aug2).

In doing so, the reactions he gets from the students varies. According to August, to a great extent, the Peak students are encouraged, while those who struggle to pass do not enjoy it as much, or even perceive it as a waste of time. In such situations, and with the aim of the Peak Programme in mind, August does not lower the demands. He has noticed how students who had previously been struggling increase their interest in the subject through this approach and develop to a level far beyond mere passing.

August specifically mentions that he approaches the research perspective of the Peak Programme through doing lab exercises. Instead of a more traditional approach giving out step-by-step instructions intended in what he calls ‘recipe labs’, he bases the instructions on open questions where the students are asked to find the answers. August claims, it challenges the students to think independently and requires them to think more deeply since they must design an experiment and use apparatus to find the answer to the problem based on their knowledge and ingenuity. At the same time, in the role as their supervisor, August describes how he nudges the students forward by asking follow-up questions which he claims give them an opportunity to analyse at different levels of independence and creativity. In the evaluation of theories and methods, like in the descriptions by the IB teachers in teaching ToK, August also

mentions the importance of guiding the students towards finding a balance between dogmatism and relativism and to question the extent of scientific laws rather than just learning about them. This is also when August encourages the students to go beyond what is known and to try to find new ways of solving a particular problem, something both he and the students find “exciting”, according to August (Aug2).

**Viktor**, the second teacher in the sample, says that when looking at the structure of the Peak Programme in the humanities from the outside, the differences between Peak and non-Peak may not seem so extensive, but more like a “flavouring than a core of the programme” (V1). At the same time, he claims the goal of the Peak Programme is to “offer more” and to “go deeper” (V1). The content of the programme is focused on political as well as cultural and historical perspectives and includes a course in Rhetoric to exercise the students’ ability to do presentations and to argue. Additionally, in comparison to the regular social science programme, Viktor refers to differences in assessments which are more clearly focused on academic studies, for example, short essays, presentations, and seminars. Occasionally he uses course literature normally used at university level. Viktor claims that to study the Peak Programme is not more difficult than general national programme, but that with such a strong focus on political and historical perspectives it is important to be interested in such topics, which implies teaching will not be adjusted to those who are not.

Regarding providing challenges, Viktor describes how he sets more demanding assessment questions which require both knowledge and the ability to analyse. A little further on in the interview he claims how such an approach would allow the students who are “highly able” to make it “as large as ever” and “as complex as ever” (V1). In asking whether the school offers any special enrichment groups where they are “offered a bit more”, Viktor replies: “That would have been nice, for example, and we have thought, I don’t know if there are, well, hmm, there are those who are very interested, a few interested in History, super interested” (V1). In the second interview he takes these thoughts further and says that he has decided to offer an enrichment course in History in the following year.

### Attitudinal aspects

In both the text analysis and in the analysis of the interviews with National Education teachers, there is a tendency for challenges to consist in acceleration in the form of tempo. In relation to that, **August** expresses some critique against the idea behind the design of the Peak Programme for being too much focused on accelerating the students, as in the meaning of only ‘going faster’. Instead, August emphasizes the importance of mixing acceleration and enrichment, something he sees as much more of a “realistic” approach to learning in order “to satisfy the need, the curiosity that is there, and actually have the

competence to give the answers” (Aug2). Also significant is the importance of connecting teaching to “cutting-edge research” (Aug2) and hypotheses of contemporary physics, “daring to leave the textbook” (Aug2). Clarifying the challenging elements of the Peak Programme in science further, he says it is more of an attitude, how things are spoken about, for example through teaching content and skills from a perspective of doing research and in choosing more advanced examples.

Similarly, in the interview, **Tove** characterises a great deal of her students as “so-called good girls” (T1) with a high level of self-critique and technical orientation. In her teaching, her aim therefore is described as to challenge them to find their own expression, beyond technical perfection. In line with descriptions by other teachers in the sample, challenging the student means to go beyond a template, and thereby to approach unknown territory. Part of that includes Tove herself making new discoveries even if her familiarity with the musical content of what she teaches is very strong. She explains:

TOVE: When I first give students a new piece, I send out a version with a few technical aspects that I think will suit them. But that is just the first step. And then after that, as it develops, it might become obvious it doesn't work for them and that we shall change strategy completely. And that is the fun of it, that it is sort of possible to choose anything. And if they make any suggestions that it might be something I haven't thought of in that way. And I love to really question everything I've done, and to reconsider, and perhaps reach the conclusion that it was a good decision after all, but that is what I enjoy the most, to question everything (T1).

What can be interpreted by Tove's responses is that the students in the school where she teaches are asked to specialise and to focus their talent. She sees it as a condition for achieving proficiency and “what separates you from others who are also good at playing their instruments and developing the individual traits which lead to you being chosen” (T1). Thus, she relates also to her own experiences of working professionally in a competitive environment where “the only way to survive is to work hard in trying to get what you want” (T1). In teaching students by preparing them for a career in a competitive context, Tove also emphasizes the importance of pushing the students to develop. As part of that she adds another aspect of enacting challenging teaching is not avoiding giving the students critique, including those who are already performing at a high level. Critique and praise are two sides of the same coin. She believes that without praise which is: “in proportion and fair, they will not learn. They are entirely dependent on us to be able to make a judgement of where they are in their development, and what needs working on (T1)”. At the same time, she says: “No one will improve by being punished or broken, totally pointless and non-productive. But they must be able to show me, and I give them a fair and correct judgment” (T1). She says it all depends on how it is worded. In this way she describes how she builds trust with the students and

how they can then rely on her also when valuing something is good, even in situations where the students' themselves think otherwise.

## Summary and Analysis

Judging by their responses, the Peak teachers in the interviews see their role as offering students demanding content and having high expectations for their performance. An enabling factor is how organisational structures including acceleration, ability grouping, and enrichment opportunities are integrated in Peak Programme policy. This means, adjusting teaching to provide such opportunities is less dependent on the teachers' own interpretations of how to enact a challenging education.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, **Viktor** and **Augusts'** Peak Programmes have developed a connection to universities where the students are taught alongside regular university students. Additionally, it is important for these teachers to be highly competent in their fields to enable them to increase complexity in their teaching. August and Viktor describe making connection to university studies, and August to think and work like a researcher. **Tove** has made a similar type of connection through contacts with professional orchestras and in providing master classes and she teaches the students to think and work like professional musicians.

In the survey it was found that ability-linked provision was only accessible 10% of the time. Contrastingly Peak Programme students seem to have more regular access to challenges, and the possibility to move on to the next level of learning rather than being constrained. A possible exception is in **August** and how his students are set to repeat the course in mathematics even if he is aware of them having studied 80 percent of it already (see Chapter 10).

As discussed in the historical background in Chapter 2 and in the text analysis in Part 2, Swedish education policy argues for late differentiation. In the structure of the Peak Programmes in the sciences and the humanities, quite a small percentage of the total amount of hours is specifically earmarked for Peak courses. This means a great deal of structure from the regular programmes remains, and why the examples of those programmes become something of a hybrid. At the same time, both **Viktor** and **August** emphasise how the thinking behind their respective Peak profiles are integrated into what they do, also in the courses which are not specifically Peak. **Tove**, finally, relates to it differently. Her teaching is based entirely on the students' skills as they enter the school, and on their forward progression, enabling students to develop towards their full potential without being constrained by an age dependent curriculum. This means no such discrepancies appear between the students' actual skills and what the curriculum requires.

## Conclusion

As can be concluded by the descriptions of all three samples of teachers, several ways to challenge students are enacted in their teaching. As in the pilot study acceleration is a common strategy followed by some enriching alternatives and ability grouping. There are examples given of mentoring, the use of competitions and of individualised assignments where the students have an input in the format of the exercises. There are also adjustments in content and in what skills are expected of the students. A common denominator found among the teaching strategies is how the teachers do not lower the demands but lead the students beyond the limits of what they are already able to do (Vygotsky 1978). The National Education teachers aim to move the students on by applying material from higher levels of education. Such a strategy is found also in the Peak teachers and the IBDP teachers references to university studies.

To these teachers in this data, providing challenges also means going beyond the immediate preferences of the students. In these examples, the students are challenged out of their comfort zone, away from 'relativism and dogmatism', as expressed by **Wilhelm** and away from interpretations already made. A common factor in the responses is how part of the role of the teacher is to guide the students towards new discoveries, and for the teacher to have the ability to do so and to have knowledge extensive enough to be able to improvise. We find it in **Hjalmar**'s ability to assimilate suggestions made by the students, in the teachers' teaching ToK and leading the discussions about complex issues, in **August**'s focus on research supported by his own PhD studies and again in **Tove** and her vast experience as a professional musician.

Therefore, exemplified in all three sets of teachers in the sample, challenging education is found not only in what organisational strategies the teachers enact but it also involves challenging students' attitudes to learning and challenging themselves as learners. In turn, this relates to the final topic of the analysis and how students are categorised by the teachers which will be analysed in the next chapter, on enactment of giftedness through definition and identification.



## Chapter 12: Enacting Giftedness through Characterisation

This last of the three chapters based on the data collected from the interviews, further explores enactment through the definition and identification of gifted students. The interpretation of the responses in terms of giftedness is based on comparing the characteristics the teachers say they use to categorise students compared to features in the cluster concept. Some teachers apply teaching strategies suggested for gifted students, but without mentioning the actual concept of giftedness, the inference that giftedness is involved is based on the characteristics implied by the teaching strategies. Therefore, in the analysis, enactment of giftedness is treated as a combination of an interpretation of what the teachers say and an interpretation of what they do via the characteristics in the cluster.

As shown in the text analysis in Part 2, contemporary conceptions of giftedness are largely limited to either fast learning and high performance, or as a situation involving special education interventions. Taken as a whole, the few responses in the pilot survey generated a wide conception of giftedness, all within the descriptors in the cluster concept. The extent to which the individual respondents contributed to the conception varied. The most frequently mentioned descriptor was the cell corresponding to fast progression. As method for identification, IQ-tests in the form of the WISC intelligence test were mentioned, along with examples of national standardised tests materials in the form of the Diamond screening test provided by SNAE<sup>72</sup> and DLS-tests.<sup>73</sup> One teacher used checklists for identification of gifted students by the

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<sup>72</sup> The Diamond material is used to “individualized teaching”, claimed to “create good conditions for passing”. The results are compared to a pre-set scheme based on expected level of ability development. See further Skolverket.se.

<sup>73</sup> The DLS is a diagnostic material used to measure level of proficiency in spelling, word comprehension, speed of reading and reading comprehension. It is not developed by any of the official school authorities, but by a company specialized in selling a number of psychological tests for a variety of purposes in education. See further Hogrefe.se.

Danish psychologist Poul Nissen.<sup>74</sup> However, teachers' own judgement was also mentioned as a way to identify the students.

In the survey, the relationship between 'teaching with a gifted perspective' and special pedagogy was also of interest. This was investigated in three ways. The first was to ask the respondents to estimate what significance receiving a diagnosis had for resource allocation to gifted students. The second question concerned entitlement to additional support, commonly used in connection to students at a risk of failing. The third question was whether the school's special educationalist was involved in teaching the gifted students. In sum, the responses indicated that the relationship between 'teaching with a gifted perspective' and special education was ambiguous, specifically that students were described as a target for special education but not provided with any corresponding resources.

## The National Education Teachers

### Categorising 'the Gifted Student'

In the national sample, **Karin** is the most experienced teacher as far as gifted education is concerned, and in her former role as a First Teacher she was responsible for identifying gifted students at her school. In general terms, Karin finds giftedness in "children whose brains are in full gear" with "eyes that shine" when confronted by new discoveries, and who are passionate about learning. Moreover, she refers to examples of students as both early learners, who grasp content very quickly and "absorb everything" (K1) and those who apply non-standard solutions to problems. In contrast, Karin also notes that giftedness may also involve emotional suffering in students who are absent from school for longer periods of time, who express frustration and boredom, and who "suffer from too much repetition" (K1). She also notices that gifted students may display a selectivity. On the one hand, she claims gifted students are passionate about learning but on the other they can display a lack of motivation, a lack of engagement and tend to do other things in class than the intended exercises. In that sense, she claims their school performances are not so much about receiving high grades, but about a will to learn and to understand, and "to do what they find interesting" (K1).

With slightly less experience of gifted education, **Selma** is the only respondent in the interviews who mentions finding a use for SNAE's in-service material (2015) in her teaching. However, in relation to categorising gifted students, she says: "I haven't met a single student who fits the description by

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<sup>74</sup> The check lists contain three parts, one directed to the teacher, one to the guardians and one to the students. For example, the questions are focused on the students' approaches to knowledge, socio-emotional characteristics, creativity and attitudes to school. (c.f. [www.talenttoolbox.net](http://www.talenttoolbox.net)).

SNAE” (S1) (see chapter 9 SNAE, 2015). Selma adopts a broad definition of giftedness encompassing students who are “extremely high performing”, “very fast” learners and abstract thinkers “who easily get bored” (S1), and students who apply non-standard and independent ways of thinking who are ahead of others of the same age and ahead of the curriculum. She describes the students as “wanting attention by adults” (S1), and as someone who “seeks you out” (S1). On the other hand, on several occasions in the interviews she also refers to gifted students as socially inadequate, frustrated, restless, bored, passive and in need of continuous challenges and in-depth learning opportunities. She says they have a tendency to end up in conflicts with other students and some she describes as on the verge of depression. She explains having experienced how gifted students become demotivated when asked to learn something they already know. In addition, Selma is very clear about gifted students’ reluctance to cooperate with students who are not at the same level as themselves, not because they do not like to cooperate but because they lose interest if the work progresses too slowly. At the same time, she admits finding it difficult to know what is part of being gifted, and what is part of more general difficulties connected to development.

Selma’s colleague **Dagmar** also defines gifted students as early and fast learners, with a great level of interest and who are “passionate” (D1). She says they can “surprise” by being able to do much more than expected (D1). These students are in need of challenges to stay motivated and are triggered by them. If they are not, they may react with frustration or by being disruptive in class. Furthermore, Dagmar makes a distinction between high-performing students in mathematics “who just want more and more” and are “super-interested” and the gifted students who might not have that type of drive but detest repetition and are on a different intellectual level than the high-performers (D1).

In contrast to explicit or implied definitions of giftedness, **Edith** says the actual concept of giftedness is not used all that often since she prefers to talk about “how to reach all students” (E2). Instead, in the interviews she repeatedly refers to students by the use of the dichotomy “strong” or “weak students” but also that “you have those who are strong but also weak [...] who are not pushing forward as clearly” and who could be gifted (E1). Moreover, she refers to ‘fast students’, ‘students who like to work independently’, who like to go deep in learning, and the ones whose level of knowledge is ahead of the expectation in curriculum for their age (E1). Edith also acknowledges that some gifted students may experience difficulties, for example in doing group work, but also having self-doubts or lacking self-confidence. For example, she mentions a student who repeatedly did not dare to try anything where he did not know for certain he would do well.

## Identification

In the interviews, **Karin** refers primarily to three of her students as gifted. Two of them are the accelerated boys in her class in Mathematics while the third student is a former female student in a class Karin did not teach, but for which she was a mentor. Asked about identification of these particular students, she describes how one of the boys was unaware of his own abilities until she pointed out that he was ready for more challenges. The other two were first noticed after problems had occurred in their situations at school, the second boy by having long periods of absence and the girl by repeatedly losing her temper with other students and teachers. According to Karin, the girl got frustrated when she thought the others were too slow and when the teachers were unable to answer her questions, which Karin describes as very complex.

With the responsibility for identification taken away from her, I asked Karin how students at her school are now identified. She says for some the WISC test is being used even if “they don’t get a diagnosis” (K1). Others she describes as being missed out:

KARIN: there are these type of students you notice, and understand they are in need of more challenges and perhaps don’t really get them, but who are not suffering emotionally so much either, so it sort of becomes, indicates....that they suffer psychologically, in some way, act out, or become restless. Often, they are left unidentified (K1).

She supplements these more instrumental identification methods by observing the student’s behaviour. For example, gifted students are those students who find mistakes and inconsistencies in instructions for tasks, something which passes by other students. “That is when you find them” (K1), she says.

Like Karin, **Selma** also discovers gifted students through difficulties in school, such as when social interaction with other students results in conflicts. When these students are not stimulated, she describes them as experiencing “an enormous sense of sadness, tummy aches, unwillingness to go to school - it is boring. It spills over into their social relationships, arguments at home” (S1). In one of her examples, she refers to a student who was in trouble both socially and emotionally before being IQ-tested and then receiving a result of 140, which identified him as gifted.

In the pilot survey, tests were mentioned as a way to formally identify gifted students in three schools, the school where **Selma** works is one of them. For example, in her class of Year 5 (age 11) she has used reading comprehension tests in Swedish constructed for Year 9 (age 15), or upper secondary school. She describes it as something of a compromise but argues that if a student receives a full score without problem on a test intended for students five years their senior “you can’t claim one is supposed to teach them according to Year 5” (S1). Here too, some of the students Selma is in contact with have been WISC tested. Sometimes this has been at the parents’ initiative and

done privately, or at the BUP<sup>75</sup>, in other cases the test has been administered by the school psychologist. In all instances the testing has been done in response to a problematic situation in school. Selma explains.

SELMA: A lot of the time, these children have been misdiagnosed [...] On many occasions they have been assessed psychologically, but not all of them. That a WISC test has been done which indicates, I mean clearly shows, and where BUP has done the assessment and found it is a gifted student (S1).

In the interviews Selma repeatedly points to the fact that tests have been used to justify her actions and her own judgement about them as gifted. For example, in relation to selecting students for her enrichment group in Swedish she says:

SELMA: I use the DLS mostly as support in talking to others, who, well, if I need to justify for the management why I've got these eight students, it mustn't be too flimsy and say things like: 'But I feel it's like that, so it probably is'. I have to somehow show - 'this is the way it is' (S1).

On the other hand, Selma sees the results as inconclusive. On occasions she has even argued against the school psychologist in claiming a student to be gifted, even if the WISC test did not indicate it. Selma contrasts the need to formally identify by referring to how students respond to changes in teaching strategies. She says she has also identified gifted students by the way the process of being challenged transforms them from being passive and excessively bored to becoming enthusiastic and passionate about their learning. Over the succession of interviews with Selma there is a detectable change in her attitude towards identification and testing, these becoming less significant regarding gifted students in the later interviews. In the last interview she reflects on this as she states she has become confident enough to know what to pay attention to in addressing the educational needs of the students, without the need of any formal identification method.

In identifying students, **Dagmar** is the teacher who applies the highest number of tests to measure student ability, in addition to assessments as part of her regular classes. In Year 2, 5 and 8 she sets the student a pre-test for the National Tests in Year 3, 6 and 9. Dagmar also applies the scanning materials made available by SNAE for the primary school students (see Chapter 8). Moreover, she uses two tests to analyse the students' level of reading comprehension in mathematics in Year 1 to 5. On a few occasions, Dagmar refers to the use of a WISC test by a psychologist as part of a referral procedure. At the same time, she claims that, from her point of view, the WISC test has 'little significance' and that, in discussions with the pastoral team, such tests turn

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<sup>75</sup> BUP is the Department for Psychological treatment of Children and Young Adults which is part of the Swedish National Health Care System.

out to be requested by guardians of the students concerned, rather than by the school or by the psychologists. She explains:

DAGMAR: When they [the parents] think their children are under-stimulated and want them to be referred, they want some sort of evidence of what the situation is like. And also, this piece of evidence makes them think that: ‘If only we get that piece of evidence’, it will entitle them to more than they get at the moment. But our job is, independently of that piece of paper or not, we are supposed to meet the students where they are, which is not the easiest in terms of priorities (D1).

Dagmar also refers to identifying students via how they react to being challenged. She mentions how she has experienced students who express a lack of motivation and engagement until being challenged and then become stimulated. She says sometimes the same students have been identified as gifted via psychological testing and sometimes not. Dagmar explains: “students with a great hunger, an interest, high performance, should be getting challenges independently of a paper document” (D1).

While not using any identification method in particular, **Edith** has been supported by a consultant from the council’s special education unit who applied a combination of student observations and checklists to identify gifted students in her class. Edith explains that from the beginning the consultant was called in to support the teachers in how to deal with a boy with behavioural issues. She says that not only did the consultant identify the student as gifted but also identified a female student in the same class, someone the teacher had overlooked. Edith claims the reason why the latter student remained undetected was because she was ‘a quiet student’.

A close connection to the central team for special education is present also in the way Edith talks about giftedness and gifted students. For example, in describing the students in the Pre-school Year she says “I know there is a report now from pre-school of a suspected case of giftedness. So, we’re trying to get them involved as soon as possible” (E1). On a few occasions in the interviews, Edith describes giftedness using the same terminology as used to describe students who has received various diagnoses. For example, she says:

EDITH: And then it seems as if it is a lot like, it is the same with other types of diagnoses, with ADHD and autism, that we have to address the students based on what they show us rather than out of a diagnosis someone has given them. At least that’s how I see it. And I think it is hard, but some students are so obvious in their gifted diagnosis, but most of them are not (E3).

The same tension between giftedness and special education occurs in Edith’s descriptions as in the survey, meaning gifted students might be referred to as having special needs, but in terms of resources are not prioritised as such. Edith explains:

EDITH: What I wish is that we, that the students who need more challen-, or how I shall put it? – Support - because they are gifted, that they get to see the special educationalist. Because we have one special educationalist now and she is very much into thinking they need support. Unfortunately, she doesn't have enough time. For we could have small groups that she, in the best of worlds, if she had time, we could make some form of enrichment group, so to speak, with the special educationalist. But as her timetable now looks it is impossible because there are so many students who need help to pass. And, that is our main goal, so to speak, or our mission, that all students should pass (E3).

While similarities between the first four of the National Education teachers can be detected, **Hjalmar**, the final teacher in the sample exemplifies a somewhat different conception. In contrast to the others, he gives the least significance to the concept of giftedness, and thereby also to definition and identification. On the one hand, the maths club he runs was set up to stimulate Mathematically gifted students. When asked to clarify what students he has in mind he defines these as “the ones who have completed their regular courses and who want something else because regular teaching is too simple” (Hj1), the “ones who are far ahead in one sense or another” (Hj1) and “seem understimulated” (Hj1). Furthermore, he defines the students as “often very driven” (Hj2). At the same time, he also expresses uncertainty in how to define giftedness. Instead, he says he prefers to talk about the students as ‘interested in mathematics’, or as ‘in need of more stimulation’ and the aim of the enrichment group for them to meet others of like minds, instead of being categorized as “nerd[s]” (Hj1).

As it turns out, the word ‘gifted’ is not even present on the application form to participate in Hjalmar’s enrichment group. The project is described as offering support; “to students who have already completed the courses in mathematics at lower secondary level, with a top mark” and “to give students who easily pass, extra stimulation and challenges in mathematics”<sup>76</sup>. Aside from the ‘top mark’ requirement there is no other ability assessment involved in finding and identifying suitable students. Indeed, once students have been selected for the activity, Hjalmar makes no further tests to find out in what way they fit the description but teaches them independently.

## Summary and Analysis

In categorising gifted students, the teachers in the National Education sample refer to some of the same features of giftedness as found in the survey. For example, there are references both to intellectual, emotional as well as social aspects. There is a pattern here where students are identified through their emotional and social status, through frustration and difficulties. Categorising students through their vulnerability and sensitivity contrasts strongly with a

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<sup>76</sup> *Letter of invitation*, received by email.

picture of a more balanced student, where the most frequently recurring aspects are students as highly able, fast thinkers and fast learners (with ‘brains in full gear’) who are in need of more challenges to be stimulated. In addition, independence plays a role in identification where gifted students are those who express a preference to working on their own, perhaps on other exercises than those set by the teachers. **Karin** also describes one of her gifted students as someone who find mistakes in textbooks and instructions, which can be related to the descriptor: questioning assumptions.

From the point of view of this investigation, enacting a categorisation of gifted students can be understood as a combination of teachers’ self-reported ‘direct’ categorisations plus the categorisations that can be inferred from the teaching adjustments teachers implement. For example, students may be indirectly characterised as fast learners and high performers because the teachers adopt acceleration and ability grouping interventions. Similarly, exercises involving problem-solving implies reasoning, argument, and analytical abilities. These inferences suggest that of the national teachers in the sample **Hjalmar’s** teaching perhaps covers greatest number of cells in the cluster concept model. Without the use of textbooks, he emphasises how the students need to rely on their own abilities to think, rather than using a formula already given. The students must make their own connections, and he describes how he encourages them to arrive at unconventional solutions, and to use their abilities to reason. This analysis of National Education teachers in the sample is illustrated by the blue cells in Figure 12.1 below.

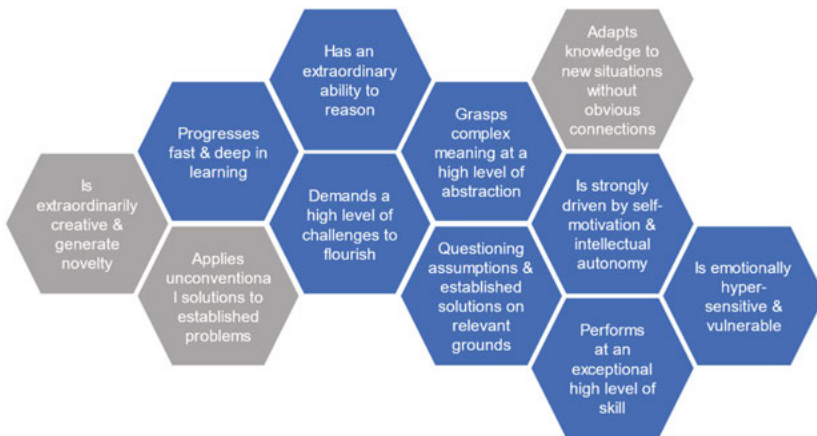


Figure 12:1 Categorization of Giftedness, National Education Sample

There is some disagreement on the importance of identification in the sample. There are examples of situations where identification is not seen as relevant, such as in **Hjalmar's** enrichment activities. In other contexts, identification is test based and dependent on an expert other than the teacher making a judgment about whether a particular student is gifted. A connection to special education is present in the sample, where the students are categorised using the same terminology as used in psychological diagnoses. Similarly, there are also connections made between giftedness and special education in that either a special educationalist is involved in teaching the students, or the teacher respondents are involved in special education. In addition, there are indications of how the students are at risk of remaining unnoticed as long as they are not in difficulty.

## The IB Diploma Programme Teachers

### Categorising 'the IB student'

As mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, the inclusion of the IB Diploma Programme in the sample is based on previous research identifying it as a suitable line of education for gifted students. However, the IB policy documents do not use the term gifted and they even take a stand against using it (IB 2018a, see Chapter 2). Therefore, in the invitation to participate in the thesis study, the expression "students who have got very far in their learning and thinking" was used. In the interviews, the IB teachers were first asked on what grounds students were accepted into the programme, and secondly, what students the teachers would typically meet in the IB. Thirdly, the teachers were asked if they were familiar with the giftedness concept and how they would then relate it to their work in the IBDP.

What the responses show is that all the IB schools in the sample apply entry requirements including grade results. In addition, they all apply proficiency tests in mathematics. Some of the schools apply tests in English and some apply interviews. In theory, this would mean the students already on their entering the programme will maintain a high level of skill. However, since the programme is taught and assessed in English, students with limited ability in Swedish may apply to do the IB for linguistic reasons.<sup>77</sup> For example, **Agnes** describes the student profile at her school as one where most students are of other than Swedish origins and **Hedwig** refers to world-wide migration patterns. In addition, she refers to effect of the pandemic which has resulted in students of Swedish families living abroad returning to Sweden and then

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<sup>77</sup> The other official languages of the IB are Spanish and French, which means that independent of where in the world the IB school is situated, the programme can only be taught in either of the three languages.

choosing to do the IB. That a diverse set of students apply to the IB is confirmed also by **Wilhelm**. In general, he categorises them as “a bit quirky” (W1) but at the same time as a mix between the ones who: “really want to be there” who “use the whole thing, and is pushing you, as a teacher, to give them more, and help them more, and provide them with challenges” and “kids who are not interested, or somewhat indifferent” (W1).

A further commonality between the IB teachers in the sample is a conception that the students in the IB in general are serious about their studies and a common conception is that the students move on to university either abroad or within Sweden. For example, according to **Agnes** the students who chose the IB, expect something different, which make them willing “to experience new ways of learning” (Ag1). **Hedwig** states her school does not get “the weakest performances” (He1) and that she can find a connection between IB students and students who are highly skilled. In comparing the IB students to the students in national programmes, she says:

HEDWIG: [...] Perhaps there is to a greater extent more students having certain ambition, perhaps, you know studying, expecting themselves to put in more hours of reading and studying, perhaps, to a certain, to a larger extent, to a greater percentage in those classes (He1).

In agreement with claims by Hedwig, **Lars** describes the IB education as “tough subjects”, “terribly broad” and “terribly demanding” (L1) indicating an expectation on the students to be able to deal with such demands and take responsibility for such studies. **Moa** paints a similar picture of the students as highly motivated with ambitions to study at university, either within Sweden or abroad. Overall, she says they are willing to learn and “they want to figure out things, they want to understand why, especially [there is] a difference in how many discussions we have every lesson on knowledge, compared to my other classes” (M1). In a similar vein to Lars, Moa mentions how she senses she gets to teach more efficiently since a lot less time in class is spent on disciplinary matters than she perceives to be the case in other classes. As an example, she develops her perception further in relating to the level of responsibility the students are expected to take through their social commitments in CAS, described in more detail in the previous chapter.

## Giftedness and the IB sample

When asked about their familiarity with the concept of giftedness and whether it is used as a way of describing students at their respective schools, the experiences in the sample differ. **Lars** states he has never heard of the concept before it being mentioned in the interview. **Hedwig** starts by saying her knowledge about giftedness is limited, but that she sees it as an educational matter that has been left behind. Nevertheless, at the end of our first interview

Hedwig admits to having more insight into giftedness than she first acknowledges. It originates in two friends of hers both having children who are identified as gifted. She mentions “an ability to immediately move on to the abstract”, to use terminology correctly and that “they get the big picture very quickly” (He1). She also describes presences of misdiagnosis, that giftedness can vary in terms of skills, and how challenging it can be to identify. Moreover, she gives voice to an uncertainty in what way gifted students need to be taught differently from other students.

In contrast, **Agnes** says immediately she is familiar with the concept and that it is being talked about in her school but that they “most of the time have to focus on [...] students who struggle” (Ag1). The closest connection between the concept and activities taking place in a school offering the IB is in Agnes description of two extra-curricular activities at her school. There is a club in mathematics and a discussion club in politics “for those interested students, or more gifted students” (Ag1). The discussion club hosts presentations by professional politicians open for any student who might be interested. The maths club, on the other hand, works on solving “extra difficult exercises” (Ag1) and participation is based on teacher recommendations. The teacher who runs the club in mathematics teaches in the IB and Agnes claims it attracts a number of final Year IB students along with some national students, but only those who speak Swedish since that is the language of instruction. Other than that, she claims giftedness is not referred to in relation to the IB students in the school where she teaches.

When asked about his familiarity with the giftedness concept **Wilhelm** expresses an attitude of scepticism. In his answer he admits his knowledge about the concept is limited but that he has come across such a student once. He explains:

WILHELM: I can really only remember in the 20 years period I've been teaching one or two kids, one kid in particular, where I was sort of thinking to myself: 'I'm probably in the last year that I can teach you, because next year you'll teach me', you know. Even if she lacked maturity in some regard she was so [inaudible] she was so sharp that I thought that I will probably struggle to teach her for much longer (W1).

**Moa** says the concept of gifted is not used in her school but that she can think of IB students who would fit into the category. In follow-up questions on what characteristics she has in mind, she describes students who are “well-rounded” meaning not just gifted in a single subject, and who would be known to their teachers since they “stand out” as “students who are just talented in, regardless of subjects” and that: “They can do it all [...] usually do beyond that as well (M1). Furthermore, she describes them as driven and for their leadership skills noticed in the way they run their CAS projects. In relation to ToK, she says:

MOA: They are the students who get it! Who make the dots, between subjects and they can see that ToK isn't just Theory of Knowledge once-a-week during the lesson time, or: 'Now we're forced to think about these issues'. They see these issues in every subject, they can think critically and reason about it without being relativistic. So, they definitely show a mature or holistic awareness in their reasoning (M1).

## Summary and Analysis

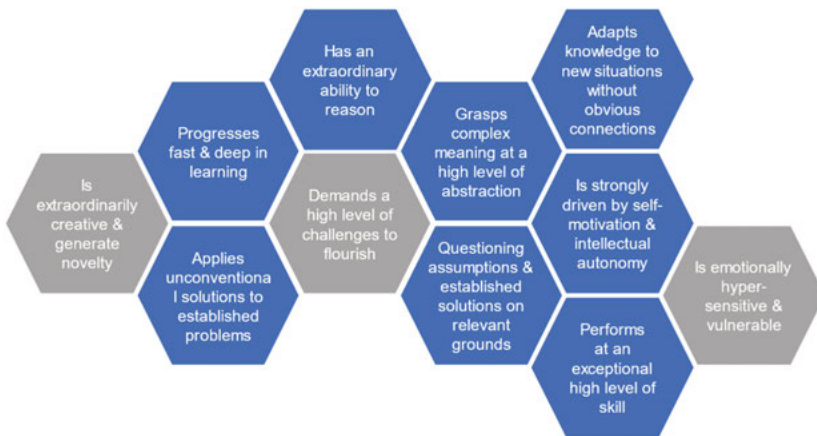


Figure 12:2 Categorization of Students, IBDP Sample

In summary, it is possible to structure the IB teachers' responses according to three aspects. The first is the way they categorise the IB students. The recurring comments are that the students come from a variety of backgrounds, but are ambitious, motivated, and mature as they take on the high demands of the programme. The second aspect is how the teachers categorise gifted students. The responses reveal, on the one hand, an awareness of the existence of the giftedness concept, and on the other, a recognition that gifted students and the IB students are different groups with the occasional student in both camps. The third is what characteristics in a student they address in their teaching. IB students are expected to be fast learners and to handle material requiring high ability and abstract thinking. In connection to the cluster concept, the ToK course stands out as a particularly interesting component of the programme structure. According to the teachers' descriptions it is focused on the students using the ability to reason and to question the taken for granted. Moreover, the impression of the IB teachers from the interviews is that they intend to develop the students' intellectual autonomy and through interdisciplinary connections train them to adapt knowledge to new situations where there might not be any

obvious connections, such as the examples where **Agnes** connects mathematics and aesthetics. The inference here is that the IB teachers categorise students without referring to giftedness, but implicitly refer to characteristics in the cluster concept. Taking the teaching aspects into account, the following descriptors would be illuminated as given in Figure 12:2, above.

In addition, while the IB students mentioned in the sample are admitted into the programme based on their performance in the form of grades but are in no way described as being identified. Even if social and emotional aspects are included in their teaching as well, the teachers characterise the students primarily out of academic aspects of their learning. Neither do the IB teachers describe their students by relating to any forms of diagnosis and there are no references to how special educationalists, psychologist or any other experts are involved in making judgements about the IB students, even if all teachers work in schools where these pastoral care structures are available. As a result, in contrast to the National Education teachers the IB students are not categorised as ‘students in need’ by the respondents.

## The Peak Programme Teachers

### Categorising ‘the Peak Student’

Peak Programme teachers, like their colleagues in the IB, do not refer directly to giftedness in relation to the students they teach. Instead, written policy describes those suitable for the programme as “with a particular interest”, “aptitude” and “talent” and “those who want to reach further” (SFS 2008:793). Consequently, the questions in the interviews with the Peak teachers needed adjusting in the same way as for the IB teachers. The questions included on what grounds students are accepted into the programme, how they characterise the students applying, and how the teachers relate to the giftedness concept to their teaching.

Starting with **Tove**, acceptance to the school where she teaches is based on auditions, which means in terms of musicality the minimum level of skill is already high. In keeping to a high standard, positions in the programme are left empty rather than being filled by applicants with too low ability. For academic performance no more than passing grades from elementary school are required. Tove is aware of how competitive the environment is if the students aim for a professional career in music. To make sure the students will stand the pressure she also applies an interview as part of the enrolment. She says: “I want to know their level of ambition, where they come from, and if they can handle a stressful situation. I need to know a little more about how they’re feeling, mentally” (T1). Her evaluation is based also on their ability to hear music, their will to work, their sense of intonation and sound production as

well as “a will to express themselves musically” (T1), and their technical ability.

In comparison, acceptance into the Peak Programme where **August** works is only based on the grades the students have received in Year 9, which means no application of additional tests or interviews. In his perception, the school where he teaches has a reputation for being demanding, and the students have a reputation for being interested in studying. At the same time, he claims the admittance level is lower in Peak than in the regular science programme. He says: “It is a bit of Swedish law of Jante in that ‘No, I wouldn’t dare’” and that even if the programme is advertised for its breadth and more students are given the opportunity to take it “I would say many are afraid of choosing it” (Aug1). In comparing the programmes, he starts by saying the difference between the Science Peak Programme and the regular Science programme are not so striking except that the Peak Programme is more directed towards doing research. The way he explains it, this influences the kind of student applying. As a result, he finds students from the Peak programme are more sympathetic towards research and open-ended methods than students in the regular programme. He thinks this is because Peak students have a view of themselves as being genuinely interested rather than motivated by “just performance, and high grades” (Aug1). He says there are more “nerds” who clearly enjoy the teaching. Another difference he detects between the Peak students and the regular students is in the type of questions asked by the Peak students. When he opens up a topic for deeper reflection, the Peak students are considerably more interested in taking their questions further.

Acceptance to the Peak Programme in the humanities is also grade based. **Viktor** describes the typical student who applies to Peak in the humanities as “a young woman engaged in social and political issues” (V1). He estimates that most of these students choose the political sciences after completing the programme, although he points out that he has no solid data to support this assertion. In comparison to the Peak students in science, who may go on to study for example Medicine, he does not see that his programme is attached to any particular prestigious profession requiring top grades. He mentions students’ wishes to work for the UN, but he interprets that in terms of idealistic reasons rather than as a goal in having a prestigious career.

## Giftedness and the Peak Programme Sample

During our three interviews **Tove** gives several examples of how her students are able to perform at a very high level of skill, but without categorising them as gifted. On the other hand, when confronted with the concept of giftedness she begins by saying it is not a concept the school uses in practice. In defining it, she relates it to being exceptional in all senses of the word, meaning both musically and in having the psychological status to deal with pressure in striving for perfection – being able to deal with something when it is not perfect.

At the same time, Tove distances her students from the giftedness concept by relating it to students in a diagnostic spectrum. She explains:

TOVE: [W]e've had a few students at our school where it's been possible to use the word gifted, but who've had big problems to, how shall I say, function normally, because they've had other problems making it really difficult. [...] Psychological problems. So many eating disorders, often complicated diagnoses making it difficult. And I have a student now who fulfils the word gifted. She really has everything, actually. She's got perfect pitch and finds it really easy to learn and to absorb very complicated things without a problem. But you very rarely see that. We've had another female student who fulfils all the criteria musically, but suffers from severe anxiety, social phobia and probably an Asperger diagnosis, but she can barely function. So, then you are gifted but at the same time severely handicapped (T3).

In response to the questions about giftedness, **August** confirms being aware of the concept. He describes it as something he met more frequently a few years ago. For example, on enrolment, he was contacted by parents to children identified as gifted and who had negative experiences of their schooling at elementary level. In one example, the parents requested August to respond to what they described as special needs of their child, motivated by an assumption that otherwise he would not do so. In this particular case, the Peak Programme turned out to be challenging enough for the student and no additional adjustments were needed. August explains:

AUGUST: The Peak Programme turned out to be good for him. But my understanding is, from what I've seen, that it doesn't feel like a diagnosis, giftedness, but it is... Well, I can understand that it can become a consequence, when one finds things really easy and that you have to be aware of, that elementary school doesn't always succeed in doing so. But from some parents you get the impression that they think it is a diagnosis, and that it is an objective one has to take into account, so it becomes something fundamentally different. [...] It seems like along with the challenges they get here, a lot of them find their place when they come here (Aug3).

He continues to develop his response and return to his perception that when the giftedness concept is used it is by the parents, resulting in students considering themselves as "in need of special treatment" (Aug3) "It is almost like a trauma that they have built in, that they are very different from everybody else" (Aug3), something he sees as "a dangerous way to go since it gets mistaken for a diagnosis" (Aug3). Instead, he thinks the students would benefit from having their skills acknowledged, that they find tasks easy to do, and then focusing the teaching on finding challenges for them "without an emphasis on being so different" (Aug3).

When asked about his awareness of the concept of giftedness, **Viktor** immediately refers to a former student:

VIKTOR: Absolutely! Gifted! There have been students who've done an early assessment of their complete upper secondary education for example, like we had a couple of years ago. And then there were of course discussions on how to handle it. That student was a member of, or at least the parents were, of some sort of organisation for giftedness, or something like that which apparently exist, I don't know. And then we, because we were, yes, we handled it, the early assessment. Yes, and then I've read a bit about it, heard a bit about it. And like I said, we've had some discussions about it here in school where there's been opinions about, well, from certain directions, like 'What is it really? 'Has it really been proven this thing about giftedness?' and 'To what extent is it actually that, and what are you supposed to do about it?'. Much further than that, it hasn't got to us. I guess it has to do with us being at upper secondary level where the general level is so high, and the demands, so it's sort of not that many who have, how shall I say, those kind of problems in finding upper secondary school that ridiculously easy so they almost, well like it's been almost a waste for them. Usually, we tend to find students who've found it easy at lower secondary level, who arrive here thinking it will be easy and then get a hard time (V1).

Furthermore, Viktor admits having met students who are “super-nerdy, interested, history students” whose knowledge “sometimes exceeds that of his own in certain areas” (V1). At the same time, they have not given him a sense of “acing” through the assessments and that the level of teaching is too low. He describes the students “in the area” of being gifted and the responses they give to the tasks he sets them as: “a very knowledgeable and interested student can chose something complex” and “expand a lot more in their choice of topic”, “really engross themselves in aspects that perhaps I haven't always heard about” (V1).

## Summary and Analysis

The responses by the Peak teachers, like those of the IB, can be analysed according to how they categorise Peak students, how they categorise giftedness and what aspects of the cluster could be implied by their teaching. On the one hand, neither **Tove**, nor **August** or **Viktor**, use giftedness as a concept in categorising the students they teach. All three of them are familiar with the concept but do not see it as relevant, or the same as in the case of the IB teachers, even as something different from the students they teach. Instead, the Peak students are directly characterised as hard working, ambitious, inquisitive, fast learners, “interested”, “super-interested”, “insanely good” or ‘nerds’.

An interesting turn in the interviews is when the teachers are asked to explain their understanding of the giftedness concept. Two of the three then relates to diagnosis, a topic that has been absent from the interviews until that point. Therefore, it seems to be the case that in the minds of these teachers giftedness is associated with diagnosis and difference. Neither are the Peak

students categorised as an object of special education, or an item for the pastoral care team, and any emotional or social difficulties are not mentioned. The exception is in **Tove**'s descriptions of vulnerabilities in some of her students, in particular when categorised as gifted.

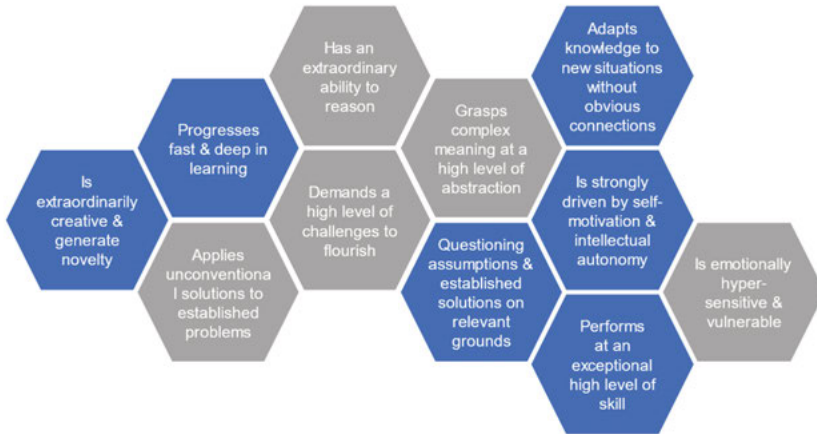


Figure 12:3 Categorization of Students, Peak Programme Sample

As with the other two samples of teachers the categorisation of students can be interpreted in some cases indirectly inferred by the Peak teachers' teaching. As discussed in the previous chapter, the content of the Peak courses is described as demanding and based on a high expectation on student performance. Since the programme focuses on acceleration one can infer the expectation that students are able to work faster and at a higher level than in the equivalent regular courses - such as the ability to take on university studies or to play with professional musicians. Both **Tove** and **August** mention the capacity for students to relate to what is already established and to question it and take it further, and to find their own novel interpretations. **Tove**, more than any of the others emphasises the students' self-motivation inferred through the large amount of practice it takes to become a professional musician. As a result, presence of the following descriptors of the cluster concept are interpreted as shown in Figure 12:3 above.

## Giftedness as Enacted - Conclusion

To summarise what have been found so far, in response to the first research question addressed in Part 2 of the thesis it was argued that while teaching strategies to address gifted students exist in the national policy documents,

direct references to giftedness or gifted students are absent, or possibly hidden inside other terminology, making guidance to teachers in such matters unclear. However, more recently, some attempts have been made to reawaken giftedness in policy resulting in an inconsistent set of advice who these students are, how they should be taught and what the role of the teacher is in teaching them.

In response to the second research question on conceptualisation of giftedness in teacher enactments a number of common denominators are found between the teachers independently of in what system they teach. For example, categorisations are found of students as fast learners and who are able to perform at a high level of skill. These are exemplified, both indirectly in what teaching strategies the teachers apply and in the way the teachers directly categorise students. The analysis in Chapter 10, identified indications of both enabling and constraining factors for teachers in all three systems, and that the teachers act as significant agents in setting policy into practice. Judging by the descriptions, whether the teachers succeed or not seems dependent on a number of factors where the relationship to the Head of School stand out as significant. A difference between the samples is that in the IB Programme and the Peak Programme the teachers find support in written policy while the National Education teachers rely on other structures or having to find their own sources.

The data accounted for in Chapter 11 exemplified how all three samples of teachers find strategies to enact challenging teaching. In part, these are connected to already established organisational structures and teaching strategies, in other cases developed specifically for the purpose of supporting the students in question. In the National Education sample, examples are found of both addressing individual students and more collective strategies involving larger parts of the student body. These are found in acceleration, enrichment, ability grouping, competitions, and mentoring. In contrast, in the IB Programme and the Peak Programme, challenging course components in the form of enrichment and ability grouping possibilities are included in the programme structures. Moreover, the enriching curricula components in the form of ToK and CAS are at the core of the IB students' diploma studies which means it includes all students at all times. A similar structure is found in the Peak Programme sample where joint classes, as exemplified by August, are directed according to the educational goals of the Peak syllabi.

In Chapter 12, in categorising students the National Education teachers emphasise gifted students as a separate category. On the one hand, they claim any formal identification is not essential for how they teach. On the other, they seem to experience a need to justify their teaching in defining and identifying students, and there are examples of test-based identification and referrals to psychologists. Consequently, connections are made between giftedness and diagnosis and to special education. In comparison, the teachers in the Peak Programme and in the IB Programme samples do not relate to their students in such a way, and do not rely on defining or identifying students as gifted. Instead, they can be seen to indirectly enact giftedness by using components

recognisable in gifted education but, as been said, do not rely on identifying students in providing for them.

## The Processes of Enacting

Relating these findings more specifically to the processes involved in enacting policy, Ball states these may include organising events, producing documents, building strategies, and borrowing ideas as the actors involved re-order, displace, and re-construct policies (Ball 2015:309). In the current data, the sample of National Education teachers can be seen as involved in several of such actions. For example, to enable the teachers to make adjustments they *redefine* what they base their teaching on by *borrowing* from other sources than the official educational authorities, such as the interest organisations Mensa and Brainchild or the NCM. The sample teachers *redefine* their role as teachers and the way the students are categorised, from primarily focusing on students in need of support to pass, to include also gifted students in their teaching as they try to avoid students being held back, having to repeat already attained skills and to work independently but still included (Rogers 2007). They represent the view of defining such actions as both important and a natural part of their teaching. They *redefine* existing structures to establish collaboration between colleagues and across to other levels of education. For example, in their role as First Teachers, they become someone responsible in what Ball et al. describe as “embodiment of policy” (Ball et al. 2012:44). This role is also played by the Head of School who in the absence of clear policy guidance in text becomes a person of significance. In addition, the National Education teachers *reinstate* differentiating teaching practices by their use of ability grouping, acceleration and enrichment, or exercises where learning tasks are differentiated but not the students (Tomlinson 1996). Lastly, the sample of National teachers *redefine* the meaning of equity by objecting to the opposition created between supporting students in need and the acknowledgement of students in the gifted category.

Furthermore, in their enactments, the IB and Peak teachers *reinstate* differentiation but as based on open application rather than selection. In comparison to national education, the policy documents regulating the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme and the Peak Programme make direct references to challenging education, excellence, and the role of the teacher as someone who teaches the students through challenges. Instead of a long-standing demand in national policy to adjust teaching to the individuality and interest of the students, the Peak and the IB teachers *redefine* this relationship by making the students adjust to the high standards of the programmes. In IB policy documents, the teachers are encouraged to go against the students’ own preferences, “to separate pleasure from effectiveness” (IB 2015a) to find not the strategies the students like the most but the ones that work the best, defined as “most effective in helping them understand, remember and learn” (IB

2015a). In the interviews such an approach is exemplified in how the teachers make the students adjust to the expectations that are put on them rather than adjusting their teaching to the students. However, criticism against such an approach is also present, exemplified in the interviews with the IB teachers and in **August's** reflection concerning the earlier more demanding structure of the Peak Programme in science, and of the students avoiding what is challenging.

In addition, the IB and Peak teachers in the sample *redefine* their role as teachers in how teaching is done by including elements of uncertainty and risk-taking (Tomlinson 1996). In comparison, the national policy documents from the 1950's and onwards claim challenging elements as having a negative effect on motivation and instead emphasise the significance of safety and enjoyment, in particular the IB could be interpreted to represent a redefinition of the relationship between challenges and motivation by stating it is the possibility of "failure and frustration" that "makes the challenge interesting and intrinsically motivating" (IB 2015a). Due to the demands found in the external examination the data also indicates how the teachers reject teaching at a level where the students are comfortable and safe, and in control of their performance. For example, in exploring new ways of thinking the IB and Peak students are challenged away from comfortable positions found in either relativism and dogmatism to "tolerate uncertainty" (W2), or in the case of **Tove**, to find a personal expression beyond many other musicians' interpretations. Instead of being satisfied with what high performing students are able to do, they are made to move beyond being strong learners of content, or masters of technical skills, to be provoked into exploring the complexities of the subject.

In relation to a national discourse, this means the IB, and Peak Programmes together could be interpreted as exemplifying a way to *redefine* the categorisation of students by avoiding descriptions of deviance and vulnerability and by not referring to students by the use of such terminology. Instead, another terminology is used to categorise the students. For example, there are references to students as not just interested but as ambitious, willing to learn. In addition, there are references to 'the nerd' who may appear as skilful and knowledgeable but also an under-dog.<sup>78</sup> Relating this further to elitism, there are examples of how the respondent *reformulate* the meaning of elitism by rejecting an economic definition. Instead, its value is redefined exemplified in the response by **Lars** then described as 'a misunderstanding', in **Wilhelm's** reference to 'a narrative trope', in **Viktor's** expression as "allow(ing) the students to invest in reaching high achievements" (V3), and by preparing students for possible positions at highly regarded universities and conservatories.

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<sup>78</sup> See for example David A Kinney's article "From Nerds to Normals. The Recovery of Identity among Adolescents from Middle School to High School" (1993). *Sociology of Education* vol. 66 (1) pp 21-40

In sum, none of the teachers in the three samples hide from the fact that they are offering more challenges in their teaching. Instead of expecting the students to work in silence, and in parallel, the challenging components are *reordered* and positioned in the centre of their teaching. Nevertheless, constraints also appear in the data. The first of these is in lack of continuity, or ad-hockery to use the same term as Ball (2015:309). Such a condition is found in previous research in the first of the five lessons by Rogers (2007) where she states research has shown the importance in being challenged on a daily basis and in a way that is structured and pre-planned (Gross 2006, Jung et al. 2015, Persson 2010, Steenberger-Hu et al. 2016). Similarly, the School Inspectorate (2016) reports a lack of planned progression for high performing students. In the interview data with the national teachers there are examples of how responsibilities, management or staff change from one school year to the next making it difficult for the teachers in the study to build sustainable structures. What seems to be the case therefore is that when the reason for making the adjustments in gifted teaching is not formulated in official policy the investments the teachers make may appear arbitrary and local.

Additionally, in all three samples of teachers, organisational matters to do with transition is an identified constraint, indicated also in former research (c.f. Freeman & Josepson 2002; Leine & Tirri 2016; Rogers 2007,) and in the report by the School Inspectorate (2016). For example, there is a danger that the influence of the enactment by national teachers remain local in that challenges prevail within the individual class, or school, but lack in infrastructural support through-out the education system central policy. Judging by the examples presented here, it means in the absence of support in policy, instead transition seems dependent on personal arrangements between teachers or between schools. In turn it affects continuity of challenges, not so much within each investment but in moving between teachers, between classes or between levels of education. A similar situation occurs also in the other two examples of education. In the IB and Peak Programmes challenges are integrated within each system, but the difference in skills and knowledge their education support in their students seems not to be taken into consideration when the students transfer to university. In neither system are students made visible for the more difficult learning they have undertaken. One possible interpretation of the reason behind such a structure is to say it is an example of an avoidance against ascribing any differences in value between student performances.

In conclusion, according to Ball (2015) teachers have agency and thereby play a significant role, not just in implementing policy, but also in enacting thus reformulating it. In one sense this would mean that the disagreement referred to at the end of Part 2, between the three official policy actors, does not matter, as the teachers find support in other sources. Yet, the findings in the data in Part 3 indicate that even if the teachers as enactors can make their own interpretations of policy in relation to giftedness, further support by the main authorities is essential for legitimacy and continuity. This means the teachers

are not fully as autonomous as it first may seem, but they are still under the influence of what is stated in central policy. In this sense, the significance is not only what the teachers do but attitudinal aspects and ideologies play a significant part (van Dijk 2007, Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006, Szabo 2017). This takes us to the final focal point of the thesis, that of giftedness in relation to *policy as discourse*, which will be addressed in the next and final part of the thesis.

## Part 4



## Chapter 13: Giftedness in Policy as Discourse

A final contribution to the thesis is to add an analysis of giftedness through the eyes of *policy as discourse*. The theory chapter clarifies what this means: primarily a critical assessment of the construction of knowledge by studying “familiar notions of established unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based on” (Foucault 1994:456), or as Ball defines it: “what can be said and thought, but also who can speak when, where and with what authority” (Ball 1993:14). So far in the thesis, the analysis has focused on the conceptualisation of giftedness in educational reform history. This was a process of retracing the evolution of lines of policy thinking back to points where certain routes rather than others became travelled, and then tracing the development from there on. In this chapter I will synthesise the conceptualisations of giftedness in text from Part 2 and giftedness as enacted from Part 3, by discussing elements of discourse, namely, what rationalities underpin these conceptualisations of giftedness and what tensions can be identified in the conceptualisation process. This discussion will form a response to the third and fourth research questions.

### Invisibility and Conformism

A point of departure in this thesis has been the observation that the Swedish education system is based on a rationality that supposes a fundamental tension between equity and excellence (Ekesryd Nordström, 2022; Mattsson 2013; Persson 2010; Pettersson 2011). Instances of such a rationality are found both in the analysis of policy as text and policy as enactment. For example: that no education should be of higher value, that ability grouping should be avoided, and that students of high ability are to adjust their performance to the group, alternatively that anyone can be a high performer. These examples are evidence of a rationality that effectively erases the difference between students in terms of ability. We can trace the trajectory of this kind of thinking back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the conception of simple equity, “where no one is entitled to more, no one has to suffice with less” (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006:30-31). We see it also in the parallel school system from the emphasis of the earliest documents on ‘invariance’ via the aim of erasing other differences such as the one between vocational and theoretical programme

students at upper secondary level. We find it also in the last Education Act in the analysis and its statements about the aim in education to even out differences (SFS 2010:800 1Ch. 4§).

A result is that giftedness transforms from being explicitly present in the documents to what Foucault (1981) would call a ‘subjugated’ or ‘erudite’ knowledge via a process that transfers differentiation from the organisational level of the school system to become a part of teaching. This transformation is clearly evidenced in the text analysis. At first giftedness is explicitly present in the form of ‘the genius’, ‘the bright lights’, ‘the boisterous talent’, ‘the academically able’, ‘the precocious’, or ‘the overly gifted’. Later it becomes hidden behind concepts with broad reference such as the general ‘students’, or even ‘all students’. Elsewhere we find the shift from references to giftedness and ability’ to the general ‘different condition’ or ‘circumstances’ and to categories such as ‘the conscientious student’ or ‘interested student’. The same shift as is found in teaching strategies. At first, acceleration is mentioned in connection with supporting gifted students. Later, although continuing to exist in policy documents, it is no longer connected to such students and there is little indication as to what could be achieved through the use of such a strategy.

Another example of this type of invisibility is how gifted students are categorised as ‘not useful’. In 1820 this condition was given as a reason for not investing in geniuses, since they were seen as too free-thinking to become good civil servants. In the report by the 1946 Commission, gifted students are seen as not worth remarking on since: “underperformance among the overly gifted most often goes by unnoticed in school” (SOU 1948:27, 450). Other examples of this line of thinking can be found in the 1950’s policy documents. Teaching ought to be adjusted according to ‘common development’ while the interested “not untalented” students (GSC 1958:116) are given two options: either to work with the rest of the class including repetition of skills they have already mastered, or in rather crude terms to work on their own in silence (Pettersson 2011; Rogers 2007; see also Ivarsson 2023). The idea of offering additional work to gifted students is simply absent. The reports by the School Inspectorate (2011; 2016; 2018) suggest that structures that maintain this invisibility still persist to the present day. The authority highlights the woeful lack of support for high performing students, for example, students who work at a fast pace are given more exercises of a similar type, they are left without feedback from their teachers and given tasks requiring skills they have already mastered.

At a systemic level, invisibility is found in differentiating late, and as a result students are kept together for as long as possible. In the earlier text documents differentiation would take place around the age of 10 or 12. In the current school system the first structural differentiation takes place at the age of 16 when students apply to upper secondary school. Further specialisation is postponed until the second year at upper secondary school when students are

around 17 years old. In the curriculum from 1970 (Lgy 70) this was motivated as enabling students who might change their minds regarding what they want to study by exempting them from having to re-take the first year. This means that students who are in doubt what to study were used as a point of reference, rather than treating them as the exception and making the default students who know what they want and allowing them to differentiate and specialise earlier. In the 2011 reform, a similar motivation for delayed specialisation is given (SNAE 2011), which means the same argument continues to be used as formulated in policy more than 50 years ago.

Similarly, it is possible to find recurring examples of what seems to be a reluctance to make structures to support gifted students permanent, or part of official structures, perhaps because they include differentiating components. In comparison, numerous examples in policy relate to differentiating structures for ‘students in need of support’, both by explicitly stating such aims, or by omitting reference to any other specific category of students when these structures are mentioned. In many cases, the infrastructure of the education system gives clear indications of how to act regarding students at the risk of failing and students in need. For example, there are instructions in the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) on how to construct statements of educational needs, about entitlement to additional support and a separate authority, SPSM, has been made in charge of inquiries concerning such matters (SFS 2010:130). From 1994, inclusion has worked its way into policy but from the start references to gifted students are omitted in these aims despite their being explicitly mentioned in the *Salamanca Statement* (1994). This is a dramatic case of only part of the statement being translated into Swedish policy – the part concerning gifted students does not make it into Swedish. What seems to be the case therefore is that certain differences between students are ‘allowed to speak’ while others are not.

## Quantified, Divided and Deviant: Formation of the Gifted Student

The discussion above can also be framed in terms of what Foucault (1995, 2008) calls the rationality of bio-politics and the invention of ‘population’ including the formation of people into different subjects, or categories. Just like in Hacking’s (2007) description of genius, the way giftedness has been invented as a category means people have been separated from the rest of the population and made into a kind of their own. Consequently, giftedness has been positioned in opposition to other categories, and criteria such as the IQ have been invoked to measure who is gifted and who is not, giving emphasis to the borderline between the category and other categories (Borland 2005; Bryson 2022; Dai & Chen 2013).

Similarly, we can see how the categorisation of students in the analysis consists of several dichotomies, or ‘dividing practices’, as Foucault (1995) calls them. In the earliest documents, students in the parallel school system were categorised as either ‘educable’, or as in ‘need to be socialised’ and later as ‘theoretical’ or ‘practical’, or as ‘able’ or as ‘in need’. Not only do such dividing practices place the gifted student in opposition to other students but also in opposition to equity since first people are divided and then hierarchised. Hacking (2007) explains this as part of the categorisation process. Once a category has been constructed, counted, and quantified, associated norms emerge. At the start these descriptive norms that tell of the grouping of the population on a scale, and the dividing of that population according to the scale but these quickly transform into prescriptive norms that determine how things *ought* to be. For example, the centre of the normal curve can shift from being a statistic about the location of the distribution to a prescription regarding what is the norm – what *should* be the case. In the data, the way this line of thinking progressed historically was that high ability was ascribed only to students attending Grammar School, meaning students from families with both prestige and money. Then, in an attempt to erase class difference, ability ceases to be differentiated and acknowledging giftedness becomes interpreted as promoting elitism. In the eyes of Foucault, the invention of such categories is an expression of control and a way of sorting the population into hierarchical structures. In Chapter 3, we saw that Borland (2005) used this idea to suggest that the elitist accusation was a consequence of thinking of the gifted student as a separate group of the population and was an obstacle to providing a stimulating education to all students according to their ability. He suggests that we “dispense with the concept of giftedness – and as such attendant things as definitions, identification procedures, and pull-out programs – and focus instead on the goal of differentiating curricula and instruction for all of the diverse students in our school” (Borland 2005:12-13)

The particular turn initiated by the 1940’s committees is interesting from a discourse perspective. In relation to the terminology of Hacking (2007) and Conrad (2007), it seems fair to argue that medicalisation not only has resulted in an increasing number of phenomena defined as in need of treatment, but in an expansion of what social institutions are involved in maintaining such rationality. Lundahl (2006) describes the 1940’s as a time recognised in “a transition away from teachers to other agents” including the psychologist (Lundahl 2006:226) who was tasked with monitoring students and advising teachers on how to act in relation to them. Additionally, the way the teachers were to become an extension of the psychologist meant medicalisation entered the classroom. The historical analysis in this thesis confirms this new rationality as being “a problem is defined in medical terms, described using medical language, understood through the adoption of a medical framework, or “treated” with a medical intervention” (Conrad 2007:5). Some examples from the text documents show there are suggestions of making “quadripartite diagnosis”

(SOU 1948:27, 446) including tests, examinations, investigations, and observations. The terminology used to categorise the students are deviant, in difficulties and in need of diagnosis. In its focus on deviance and gifted students at risk, SNAE (2015b) ascribes most strongly to such a conception, with statements about gifted students like: “When the deviation from the normal distribution increases, so does the difference to the normal student” (SNAE 2015:1.1,10), that: “[m]any need to be allowed to cooperate with other gifted students – to feel normal – at least in parts of teaching” (SNAE 2015:1.2, 10) and in claiming that those closest to gifted students are members of the pastoral care team and psychologists.

As an effect, it is possible to claim aspects of education have been transformed into what could be described as ‘*meducation*’, meaning that the borderline between education and treatment becomes blurred, and one in which the educator can be seen as treating deficiencies such as giftedness through application of pedagogy. Secondly, another dividing practice is created between normality and deviance where giftedness is positioned on the deviant side. Contributing further to such a categorisation, previous research has indicated occurrences of misdiagnosis of gifted students. For example, extensive knowledge in specialised areas has been interpreted as autism and the lack of educational challenges resulting in lack of attention as ADHD (Beljan et al. 2016; Cornoldi et al. 2023; Persson 2014; Reis et al. 2014; Taska et al. 2022) mentioned also in the interviews with Hedwig (He1), Selma (S1) and August (Aug3)).

On the other hand, rather than categorising giftedness as deviance it is possible to claim such conceptions are based on a particular narrow definition of normality found in a reliance on the normal distribution curve. It means that the closer the person is to 100, the average score on an IQ test, the more normal, while the further away from the average the more deviant the student. As a result, instead of seeing varying ability, including giftedness, as normal it becomes an example of how the normal is transformed “into the pathological” (Conrad 2007:13), and 100 becomes a prescriptive norm as described above.

Much hangs on what a diagnosis is used for. A parallel situation to the one described here can be found in the area of special education. In Chapter 3, Peter Haug (1998) was quoted in this respect stating that the relationship between diagnosis and educational needs is unclear (Haug 1998:36). Another example of the same argument is by Gunnlaugur Magnússon (2015) where he claims how “[t]he need for diagnosis as a necessary tool for obtaining allocation of economic resources is [an] indicator of how school practices can be forced into categorising pupils and their need for support” (Magnússon 2015:116). Referring this type of rationality more specifically to Swedish conditions, in a case study Hjörne and Säljö (2004) participated in meetings by Pastoral Care teams for a period of one year. The aim of their study was to analyse how the teams used diagnoses in categorising students and their prob-

lems in school. Not only did they identify a substantial lack in critical reflection in how the diagnoses were used to explain a variety of behavioural aspects within the students, they also identified a lack of arguments and analysis and an absence of discussions on pedagogy in those meetings (Hjörne & Säljö 2004:19-21). Relating the exemplified findings to the current study, a key question is to what extent diagnosing students as gifted actually creates a better understanding of their educational needs and gives them access to more resources and support. The danger is that they are only left with the diagnosis.

In comparison, the contemporary documents by the IB repudiate such a medical gaze as they emphasise the role of the teacher as first and foremost an intellectual leader. Secondly, they clarify it is the students' responsibility to become aware of obstacles in their learning and to develop strategies to overcome them, not the teachers' responsibility to prevent them from occurring. As explained in Chapter 2 on context, the IB documents actively argue for an andragogical<sup>79</sup> approach where students are to be taught as responsible adults, without categorisations relating to care, and they take an active stand against references to diagnosis. Instead, they refer to 'learner variability', 'differentiated instruction' and 'access arrangements' (IB 2016). Neither do the teachers in the IB and Peak Programme samples use a medical terminology in relation to students, until they are asked to reflect on the concept of giftedness. Thereby, among the IB and Peak teachers in the study, the perception of giftedness seems both separated from the teaching strategies they apply, but also connected to a diagnosis category.

## Challenging of Status Quo

According to Foucault (1981, 2008), education as one of society's institutions, works to defend the policy of the state in a particular issue, to preserve status quo and avoid the risk of being taken over by other competing ideologies. In following the trajectory of policy as text over time, a few examples of cross-roads appear where particular decisions were made affecting the way giftedness has been conceptualised. The first is from the 1940's committee where a categorisation of the student as gifted and in need of challenges is placed in opposition to the student as vulnerable. While professors Anderberg and Landquist describe gifted students as disruptive if not challenged and argue for investment in them, Elmgren argues against any specialised educational options of gifted students since he claims it is elitist (SOU 1943:19). In the subsequent policy documents, there is no evidence of the arguments presented by Anderberg and Landquist why their voices make out another example of subjugation. Approximately 60 years later, in 2012, when demands are put on

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<sup>79</sup> "The art and science of helping adults learn" (IB 2015b:23).

the Swedish education authorities to address giftedness, they respond by redefining it. Firstly, such actions can be detected, as mentioned, in the translation of *The Salamanca Statement* (1994) by the Ministry of Education by rendering the expression ‘gifted children’ by the general ‘other children’. In a similar manner, SNAE’s (2012) response to demands by the European Council can be read as a reluctance to change, firstly by stating what needs doing is already done, and secondly, by objecting to the definition of giftedness. As a result, rather than making any changes the demands are interpreted as conforming to the already existing national discourse. This gives reasons to come back to the role distribution between two of the main policy authorities involved in governing national education in Sweden, SNAE and the School Inspectorate. While SNAE seems more reluctant to change their views of giftedness as a representation of elitism, the Inspectorate does not place high performance in opposition to equity. Instead, they argue that the inclusion of high performing students, and their entitlement to an education that is challenging, is part of equity (SFS2011:556, the School Inspectorate 2018a, see also the School Inspectorate 2018b, 2019).

Together the examples from text and enactments indicate presence of the calibration claimed by Lundahl (2006) where expectations regarding student performance accords with the curriculum, which is based on “what a normal child would normally perform” (Lundahl 2006:198). In the text documents we can interpret indications of such thoughts in the significance of avoiding abstraction and complexity and in offering support to students who easily passes the minimum requirements, while nothing is mentioned about the ones who easily passes more than that, including even exceptional performance. Other contemporary examples of such rationality are referred to by Persson (2010) where non-standard solutions are treated as mistakes, and exercises are supposed to be completed at the same rate as other students. Pettersson (2011) describes how participants in her research are expected to do the same exercises independently of their skills in mathematics. The School Inspectorate (2011) points to students having to wait for the others before being allowed to progress and how they receive more of the same exercises instead of something more challenging.

In commenting on the 1940’s school committee, Lundahl writes that early differentiation was not in line with socio-liberal school politics (Lundahl 2006:1/2007:1, 6). In addition, already from the beginning, the debate became centred on socioeconomic factors and on a need to reform the education system to reduce its class-perpetuating effects, and one where political arguments have had more weight than pedagogical (Marklund 1985:30) rather than how to build a system which could support students of a full spectrum of abilities (Dahllöf 1967). Of interest is what would have happened if, of the four professors, Anderberg or Landquist would have been chosen instead and if Elmgren’s claim about ‘students at the positive end of the bell curve’ was taken notice of.

## Conclusion

It could be argued that despite appearances, the parallel school system did not end in 1962. Instead, it was reformulated in a visible school system consisting of both a general ‘all students’, or ‘students in need of support’, and an invisible system where students designated by the cluster concept are expected to adjust their abilities, to drive their own learning, and work on their own assessments outside the teacher’s attention, or to accept a categorisation of themselves as deviant and as in need. In this respect, Swedish educational policy could be seen as systematically restricting developmental support for gifted students – as they are caught between anti-elitist politics and psychological metrics. From the enactments as a whole, it can be concluded that all three samples of teachers explore the possibility of offering adjustments against an underlying educational discourse driven by sameness and ‘invariance’, as shown in the text analysis. However, these incentives still lack outside recognition in terms of the kinds of knowledge and skills developed over and above the norm.

According to Hacking (2007) and Foucault (2008), discourse both carries and constructs different rationalities. Relating this to examples referred to in the thesis, another possible conclusion therefore, is that the rationality behind Swedish education policy, paradoxically enough, exemplifies several dividing practices. These practices can be summarised as divides between equity and excellence, but also between normality and deviance, and collectivism and individualism. The education system seems founded on the idea that difference in value is a problem solved if no differentiating structures are officially mentioned. At the same time, in the formation of the gifted subjects, the disciplining power differentiates gifted and non-gifted individuals according to a minimal definitional threshold which “compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes [and] excludes” (Foucault, 1995:182-183).

To a great extent, the work by the contemporary teachers can be seen as being about reformulating policy by making the gifted students visible again, but at the same time ignoring accusations of elitism made against them. It means differences in student ability are recognised, but without buying into false dichotomies placing giftedness in opposition to other students and their value. What is made visible in the data is also what it means to challenge. In doing so teachers in the samples resist the opposition between caring and challenging, thus redefine the purpose of their teaching and their roles as teachers. While some of the National Education teachers indicate how easy it is to fall into the trap of placing gifted students in a category of deviance and in contrast to normality, the IB and the Peak texts and enactments show how gifted education can be realized, without having to use the concept of the gifted students and without the students being silenced, and hidden in general descriptions of

all students, or diagnosed. It means that the IB and Peak could be seen to represent what Borland describes as “gifted education without gifted students” (Borland 2005).

In a similar way Margaret Sutherland and Niamh Stack in their article “Ability as an additional support need: Scotland's inclusive approach to gifted education” (2014) discuss tensions created between giftedness and inclusion. They clarify the way Scotland has been influenced by UNESCO’s *Salamanca Statement* (1994) in taking on inclusion as an aim in education. Just like in Sweden, in their description a strong focus of such work has been on students in need of additional support, while gifted students have not been included in the same way (see also Marsili et al. 2023). However, Sutherland and Stack describe a shift in perspectives behind inclusion from a ‘need-based’ and to a ‘rights-based’ model. The difference they define as the following:

A needs-based model suggests that special help for particular groups of children can best be provided when separate groups with common difficulties or issues are taught together. Once such groups have been provided for, the rest of the school population can be regarded as normal. In contrast, a rights-based model of education does not search for a group identifiable as different from the majority (Florian, 2008; Head & Pirrie, 2007) but instead focuses on community and learning (Head, 2011). As such, the learning context becomes a focus for development and a means for developing a more just society in which difference and diversity are celebrated, not segregated. (Sutherland & Stack 2014:76).

Because of this change, the view of giftedness in relation to inclusion will change. Just like Borland (2005), Sutherland and Stack argue that it leaves behind the whole issue of a need to identify gifted students, where, and if they should be taught and by whom. Instead, it enables “focusing our attention on educational beliefs and values that must be applied equally to all learners” (Sutherland & Stack 2014:76). As a way forward they state:

A fundamental principle in education must be about promoting social justice. Gifted education is often mistakenly equated with constructs of elitism (Sapon-Shevin, 2000) and thus not readily associated with such a principle. However, we know that gifted young people exist in all strata of socioeconomic status. Equally, we know that education does not exist in a vacuum. Highly able learners cannot be considered in isolation from other learners [---] Surely, if we have learnt anything from inclusive practices and gifted education, it is that difference can, and should, be valued (Sutherland & Stack 2014:85-86).

Finally, the reading of policy through the eyes of discourse means a focus on power. Given that disciplining structures aim to control, why would there then be a need to control and discipline gifted students? One type of response could

be because they are unpredictable and disobedient as they “find their own unexpected paths”, as expressed in *The Grammar School Statute* from 1820. This is also what is captured in the quotation by Hofstadter at the very beginning of the thesis, indicating that such a student is not driven by a search for controlled truth (knowledge) but is interested in more unpredictable uncertainty. In his reference to genius, Hacking (2007) states that ‘true genius’ will be “rejecting classification” and “blithely refuse to interact with questionnaires, institutions, experts and knowledge” (Hacking 2007:317). Kokot in footnote 14 advises us to focus our attention on students who fail and “fool around” (Brainchild 2016, see also Freund & Holling 2008, Kim 2006 and the connection between creativity and giftedness).

Another type of response is to say these students belong to an elite, and not in the same sense as an elite sports person whose performance is something to relish, but as someone unjustifiably privileged and advantaged. Yet, as both previous research and the current study have shown, the concepts of giftedness and elitism are not interchangeable (Benbow & Stanley 1996, Mattsson 2013, O’Reilly 2018, Pettersson 2011, Riley & White, 2016, Smith & Campbell 2016). As indicated by Persson’s Mensa survey, several of his respondents did not know they were gifted until they were adults but give disheartening descriptions of their experiences of the education system (Persson 2010). In the interviews, there are examples of how students themselves, or their parents, did not know about the child’s capacity until they ran into severe problems at school. This is also where a contradiction occurs in the argument. In the attempt to avoid any support to what is seen as generating class difference these differences may instead become more significant. For example, if public education is not challenging enough, resourceful parents may turn to private initiatives such as financing a tutor, enabling their children to attend schools abroad, or teaching their own children, options that are unavailable to less financially strong families. In agreement with Sutherland and Stack and as a way forward, therefore, I would like to conclude by going back to where we started, or actually even a little further, and to *The Grammar School Statute* from 1807 where it is stated:

If such a disciple exists, with such fathoming gifts, diligence, and devotion that he [sic!] progresses more rapidly than others can follow, he should not be hindered or restrained, but taken into exceptional care (GSS 1807:287).

## Chapter 14: Concluding Remarks

The aim of the thesis has been to increase understanding of the conceptualisations of giftedness within a Swedish educational context. The thesis extends previous research done in Sweden and work to include other subject matter than mathematics and encompasses three different kinds of educational programme to provide insights not previously available. While there is former work on the ‘differentiation question’ this is the first investigation that has been undertaken in Sweden from a giftedness perspective.

Additionally, the thesis can be seen as contributing important results to the international research field of giftedness. For example, previous research has indicated the importance of the teacher as a gatekeeper for giftedness (Dare & Nowicki, 2018; Ekesryd Nordström 2022; Margrain 2021; Szymanski et al., 2018). However, framing the role of the teacher in enactive terms offers a different approach since it focuses more substantially on the actual actions taken by teachers in their enactment of giftedness. The assumption is that teachers may not act according to what the documents suggest, or that they may interpret them differently, as argued by Ball (1993, 2012, Ball et al. 2015). By appealing to enactment as a theoretical background, with its dynamics and feedback loops, rather than a sequence of production of policy followed by implementation, offers a possibility of interpreting the relationship between teachers and policy documents in a more open and non-linear manner. Indeed, the decentralisation of Swedish education in the reform from 1994, and the lack of standardisation present in curriculum and assessment, place even more emphasis on enactment and the active involvement of teachers in the dynamics of policy rather than a more centralised system where teachers’ actions are more tightly circumscribed and there is less room for individual interpretation. This thesis shows such an approach in action and how giftedness is enacted throughout the system particularly at the individual level.

The thesis also makes a theoretical contribution to the research field with the innovation of the analytical model of the cluster concept. This model offers new possibilities to giftedness research that has hitherto relied on models based on a traditional categorisation requiring necessary and sufficient conditions usually linked to IQ-level or limited to high achievement (Barab & Plucker 2002; Jung 2022; Lo et al. 2019). As mentioned in Chapter 3, and

illustrated in Figure 3.1, the model is a synthesis of dozens of different representations and formulations of giftedness in the research literature. Hence, the model is encompassing rather than reductive in its design – attempting to capture a variety of existing definitions. The cluster concept thus not only broadens the scope of the investigation of giftedness but allows perhaps a more open approach since a static or traditional model, as Andersen (2002) notes, may not capture the characteristics of what is essentially a complex area. Instead, the cluster concept makes possible the notion that giftedness is a dynamic concept that may be conceptualised in a plurality of ways and in different ways by different people and different times. The cluster concept is therefore a tool that can trace how the conceptualisation has evolved and changed over time. It can also be used to compare conceptualisations and indeed manifestations of giftedness at a given moment. It seems that the concept has functioned well in both these respects given the analysis in the previous chapters.

What are the limitations of the model? All models are of course a simplification of the complexity of the world – that is also the source of their power – but does the cluster concept limit the analysis in any other respect? As mentioned above, the model is based on conceptualisations in the research literature, but as a reasonable theoretical model also limits the number of available categories. Could it be that the model conditions our expectations so that we are primed only to perceive what is in the model and to ignore other possibly relevant features? In response it could be argued that neither policy writers nor interviewees knew of the existence of the model, and their productions are not influenced by the terms in the model. Therefore, if there is any doubt as to whether a given passage of text has been correctly interpreted in terms of the model it is sufficient to go back to the original text and check the exact wording that was used and then apply the interpretive procedure of van Dijk. In this sense the analytical process is transparent and checkable – hence objectively evaluable. Moreover, there was never any pretence that the model was definitive. It is a tentative or provisional tool based on a necessarily finite literature search and it is expected that it will become refined with further use. For example, other cells may be added if they are deemed necessary and the evidence in the literature warrants it. In time, perhaps some of the cells included may be viewed as redundant and removed. However, if there had been descriptions in the text or the interview responses that required an expansion of the model this could have happened. In the current study, this did not turn out to be necessary since all conceptualisations fitted into already established cluster cells. Another line of critique could be that, in contrast to traditional definitions with a sharp boundary, the cluster is too generous, too inclusive, too relativistic, and thereby lacks power to distinguish the phenomenon of giftedness that is the target of the investigation. It is worth pointing out that other explanatorily useful categories are defined in terms of clusters of properties and work perfectly well. One need only think of categories such as mammals, money, or games to be convinced (Glenney 2013).

As a final point of reflection, I would like to return to Carol Bacchi (2009), and her emphasis on *self-reflexivity* in doing a discourse analysis. You may recall from Chapter 5 her reference to the three components as evidence of such reflexivity; to use relevant and related text examples in the data collection, to show complexity by acknowledging contesting positions, and to show a solid understanding of context (Bacchi 2009:19ff). What has been presented in the thesis is a study of the education system and the ‘differentiation question’ from a historical standpoint. This has been based on commonly referred sources by Marklund (1985), Lindensjö and Lundgren (2006), Richardson (2010) and Dahllöf (1967). These sources do not argue in favour or against the position of gifted or not gifted students in the system but rephrase what issues were in the centre of the debate and its outcome. Similarly, as a researcher, and as I clarified in the critical evaluation in Chapter 5, I did not go into the investigation with any particular outcome in mind in terms of how giftedness is perceived or conceptualised in the data. I was (and am) open to different paths through the complexity I see before me, as plenty of other possibilities remain to be explored in the area of research concerning giftedness in Sweden and beyond.



# Sammanfattning

Utgångspunkten för den här avhandlingen har varit den spänning som identifierats i svensk utbildning mellan att konstruera ett inkluderande skolsystem samtidigt som olika förmågor tas tillvara, utmanas och stimuleras – i utbildningspolicy formulerat som 'differentieringsfrågan' (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006). Historiskt sett har frågan sitt ursprung i första halvan av 1800-talet när det svenska skolsystemet var delat i två, utbildning i läroverk för barn i familjer med pengar å ena sidan, och folkskolan för socialisering av barn från fattiga familjer å den andra (Burman 2014). Som en följd av detta parallellskolesystem begränsades tillträde till vidare- och högre utbildning till personer med pengar och status. Situationen förändrades 1962 när en kostnadsfri gemensam grundskola för alla realiserades. Grundtanken bakom det gemensamma enhetsskolesystemet var att undvika särskiljande strukturer och i stället för att differentiera organisatoriskt, differentiera pedagogiskt i klassrumsundervisningen (SOU 1948:27). Samtidigt hävdades att om inga statuskillnader bekräftades i systemet skulle dessa upphöra. I reformarbetet tog det sig uttryck i ett utjämmande av skillnader mellan praktisk och teoretisk utbildning, ett avståndstagande från att ha examensprov och utbildningar med prestigefulla namn, samt att senarelägga alla former av differentiering och specialisering (Lindensjö & Lundgren). Debatten kom därför att fokusera på politiska frågor om hur systemet skulle reformeras för att utjämna klasskillnader snarare än pedagogiska frågor om hur ett och samma system skulle kunna tillgodose ett spektrum av olika förmågor (Dahllöf 1967, Marklund 1985).

Med början i Persson (1997) har i samtida forskning kritik framförts att det svenska skolsystemet blivit alltför likriktande och därför brister i uppmärksamhet till de elever som kategoriserats som särskilt begåvade, i internationella sammanhang ofta benämnda som '*gifted*' (Persson 2010, Pettersson 2011, Mattsson 2013). Till exempel har undersökningar visat att elever hålls tillbaka i sitt lärande, att de alieneras och betraktas som ett hot mot läraren och övriga elever. Dessutom omtalas eleverna i termer av elitism och att hög prestation begränsas till elever från hem med hög ekonomisk status. Därför är argumentet att elever i kategorin särskild begåvning inte behöver uppmärksammas i undervisningen eftersom de är självgående. Å andra sidan har forskning visat att som ett resultat av denna syn att dessa elever underpresterar genom att anpassa sin prestation efter en lägre förväntan på deras förmågor men också att de utvecklat en misstro till utbildningssystemet (Persson 2010). Fyra

avhandlingar om särskild begåvning inom matematikdidaktik som lagts fram i Sverige visar på liknande resultat i en förväntan på konformitet, brist bland lärare på kunskap och förståelse för vad särskild begåvning är, och hur eleverna bör undervisas, men också att lärare är villiga att göra anpassningar även om de saknar verktyg att göra så (Pettersson 2011, Mattsson 2013, Szabo 2017, Mellroth 2018).

Trots en lång tradition av internationell forskning på området är den aktuella avhandlingen den femte som skrivits inom området giftedness/särskild begåvning och utbildning i Sverige. Det är också den första som skrivits som inte har ett fokus specifikt på särskild begåvning och matematik. För att studera positioneringen av särskild begåvning vidare, har syftet med den aktuella avhandlingen varit att i form av en diskursanalys öka förståelsen för hur särskild begåvning begreppsliggörs i svensk utbildningspolicy i form av textdokument och *enactments* (ageranden/iscensättningar) av lärares praktiker (Ball 1993). Arbetet har baserats på följande fyra forskningsfrågor:

- Hur konceptualiseras särskild begåvning i ett urval av styrdokument?
- Hur konceptualiseras särskild begåvning i ett urval av 'enacted' undervisningspraktiker?
- Vilka rationaliteter grundar sig konceptualiseringen på?
- Vilka spänningar uppstår i konceptualiseringsprocessen?

Vidare har analysen begränsats till tre teman fokuserade på särskild begåvning; vilka undervisningsanpassningar lärarna kan göra för att utmana, hur särskild begåvning kategoriseras genom definition och identifikation och lärarnas roller kopplat till anpassningar och kategorisering.

## Forskningsdesign

För att tillgodose syftet med avhandlingen har en kombination av modeller, teorier och metoder använts. Med grund i tidigare internationell forskning, Wittgensteins (1953) teori om 'family resemblance' och Gauts (2005) definition av konst har en klustermodell konstruerats. Detta för att fånga de mångfasetterade aspekterna som särskild begåvning kan kategoriseras som. Behovet av en sådan modell motiveras i första hand utifrån den kritik som finns mot att begränsa särskild begåvning till ett visst IQ-värde, eftersom detta inte fångar alla aspekterna av begåvningen (Borland 2005, Dai 2010, Gardner 2011). För det andra så används inte själva begreppet särskild begåvning i svensk utbildningspolicy förrän på senare tid, medan de kriterier som begreppet syftar på går att hitta tidigare. För att fånga denna rörlighet fanns ett behov

av ett dynamiskt begrepp av den typ som ett kluster tillåter (Andersen 2002, Gaut 2005).

I valet av teorier har jag refererat till diskursanalys grundat på Michel Foucault (c.f 2008) och framför allt kopplat till statens rationalitet (*Raison d'Etat*) och subjektifiering (*formation of the subject*). Dessa begrepp utvecklades ytterligare med hjälp av filosofen Ian Hacking (2007) och sociologen Peter Conrad (2007) som tillsammans pekar på två vanligt förekommande rationaliteter – kvantifiering och medikalisering inklusive kategorisering av människor. För att förtydliga vilka aktörer som är involverade i styrningen av utbildning och vad som ingår i dessa processer användes en kombination av Bo Lindensjö and Ulf P. Lundgrens (2006) cellmodell för policystyrning och Stephen J. Ball's teori om policy enactment (1993).

I ett förtydligande av vad som menas med de undervisningsanpassningar, som i tidigare forskning visats lämpade för att utmana särskilt begåvade elever, valdes beskrivningar av Karen Rogers (2007) och Carol Tomlinson (1996, 2014). Dessa är till stor del centrerade runt begreppen accelerering - att få gå fortare fram och hoppa över delar och moment i undervisningen som redan befästs, berikning (*enrichment*) i form av fördjupningar antingen inom gällande kursplaner eller som komplement, nivågruppering och slutligen differentiering. Det sista begreppet innebär i korthet att undervisningen anpassas efter elevens arbetstempo men även utifrån en ökad komplexitet och höjd abstraktionsnivå vilket ger eleverna mera möjligheter att själva dra slutsatser och att bearbeta ett material i stället för att lära in och reflektera runt något redan färdigbearbetat.

I enlighet med Stephen Balls teori om policy som text och som *enactment* delades avhandlingens empiriska data upp i två huvuddelar. Den första bestod av styrdokument som reglerar utbildning i Sverige i form av skolstadgor, skollagar, läroplaner och kursplaner från 1820 till 2022. Dessutom ingick ett urval av Statens offentliga utredningar (SOU) och nyligen publicerade texter från de tre skolmyndigheterna, Skolverket, Skolinspektionen och SPSM som specifikt berör särskild begåvning. Den andra delen av dataredovisningen bestod av en pilotstudie i form av en enkät till ett litet urval av lärare och som användes för att skapa en hypotes om relationen mellan särskild begåvning och enactment. Dessa hypoteser undersöktes vidare genom berättarfokuserade samtalsintervjuer med 31 praktiserande lärare (Hydén 2000) där samma respondent intervjuades vid tre olika tillfällen under ett läsår.

Även om undersökningen centrerades runt svensk utbildningsdiskurs så är svensk läroplan inte det enda utbildningsalternativ som erbjuds i Sverige. Ett återkommande argument i internationell forskning rörande särskild begåvning är att International Baccalaureate erbjuder ett utbildningsalternativ som är lämpat för särskilt begåvade elever. IB:s gymnasieutbildning (Diploma Programme) har funnits i Sverige sedan 1977 och erbjuds idag på runt 29 skolor i landet. En genomgång av grunderna i IB-utbildningen visar att nyckelorden är specialisering, excellens, utmanande utbildning inklusive risktagande.

Samtidigt betonas vikten av inkludering och mångfald. Lärarrollen består av att utmana och vägleda men eleverna förväntas själva ta ett stort ansvar för sin inläring. Sammantaget bidrog detta till relevansen av att inkludera även IB-utbildningen i urvalet.

Ytterligare ett utbildningsalternativ i Sverige har erbjudits från 2009 då ett beslut togs om att införa spetsutbildningar som ett komplement till de i det reguljära systemet. Denna variant av utbildning riktar sig till elever ”som behöver extra utmaningar” som har ”särskilda talanger”, ”för att ge ökad motivation för dem som vill och kan nå längre” och ”utvecklas optimalt i förhållande till sin kapacitet och förmåga samt intresse” (Utbildningsdepartementet 2008). Spetsutbildningarna bygger även till delar på accelerering och berikning och ett undantag i *Högskoleförordningen* (SFS1993:100) vilket gör det möjligt för spets elever på gymnasiet att studera kurser på universitetsnivå trots att de formellt saknar behörighet. Sammanlagt ingick därför tre grupper av deltagare i studien: lärare i grundskola och gymnasium som gör uttalande satsningar på särskild begåvning, lärare från IBDP och lärare som undervisar på tre olika spetsprogram, i naturvetenskap, inom humaniora och i musik.

## Begreppsliggöranden av särskild begåvning i text

För att strukturera analysen delades textdokumenten in i tre tidsperioder utifrån viktiga händelser i reformarbetet i förhållande till differentieringsfrågan. Den första perioden sträcker sig mellan 1820 till 1928 och kännetecknas av ett uppdelat parallellskolesystem. De beskrivningar som gavs av lärarrollen i de tidigaste dokumenten var till stora delar begränsade till att disciplinera ’lärlingarna’ genom att belöna eller bestraffa. Inte heller gavs några mer detaljerade råd rörande undervisningsanpassningar. Avseende eleverna exemplifierade båda delar av systemet grovska kategoriseringar. Läroverkseleverna antogs vara kompetenta, bildningsbara och ha omfattande kunskaper i ett antal olika ämnen. I den första läroverksstadgan från 1820 omnämndes ’snillet’ som en elev med flera aspekter i klusterbegreppet men samtidigt som någon alltför oförutsägbar och självständig för att vara användbar som tjänsteman, ett vanligt mål med läroverksstudierna. Efter 1856 användes inte längre begreppet. Inte heller förekom den vidare kategoriseringen av deras förmågor. I stället begränsades kategoriseringen av elever i klusterkategorierna till hög prestation och snabb inläring.

I jämförelse erbjöds eleverna i folkskolan, endast grundläggande kunskaper i ett fåtal ämnen och praktiskt inriktade färdigheter. I folkskolans dokument förekommer inga referenser till särskild begåvning eller högpresterande annat än möjligen från 1919 då i form av manliga elever som skickliga hantverkare. Kvinnliga elever å sin sida befanns vara utanför kategorin av högpresterande.

Slutsatsen som dras är att till en början existerar läroverk och folkskola oberoende av varandra och för olika elever samtidigt som väldigt begränsad uppmärksamhet gavs till särskilt begåvade elever i båda delar.

Mellanperioden i analysen rörde åren mellan 1940 till 1968 och presenterar ett antal förändringar. Två kommittéer utsågs till att arbeta fram förslag på hur skolsystemet skulle reformeras, den första med början 1940 och den andra 1946. I SOU-rapporten från 1940 års skolkommitté (SOU 1943:19) ger fyra nyligen installerade professorer i pedagogisk och psykologi sina synpunkter på differentiering i egenskap av experter på området. En av professorerna, Rudolf Anderberg, argumenterade med grund i Lewis Terman och Edward Thorndike, båda namn som refereras till inom gifted-forskningen, för utbildning av sådana elever och för en bred kategorisering av begåvning. Anderberg argumenterade också för tidig differentiering och varnade för negativa konsekvenser om dessa elever inte blev uppmärksammade i undervisningen, hur det skulle kunna leda till underprestation, brist på motivation och att deras fulla potential inte uppnåddes. Anderbergs argument fick dock väldigt liten uppmärksamhet i det efterföljande reformarbetet. I stället gavs desto mer röst till en annan av de fyra professorerna, John Elmgren. Med grund i bland annat Piaget menade Elmgren att all undervisning om abstrakta förhållanden skulle vänta tills efter 12-årsåldern eftersom eleverna innan dess inte hade förmåga att tillgodogöra sig sådan undervisning. Enligt den senare ingick i lärarens uppdrag i stället att vara vaksam på puberteten och hur så få krav som möjligt skulle ställas på elever i denna känsliga fas av utvecklingen. Därför skulle elever differentieras så sent som möjligt. Elmgren hävdade dessutom att undervisning som betonar särskild begåvning var att betrakta som elitistisk.

Trots att tre av de fyra professorerna enades om att tidig differentiering var det bästa alternativet gick den fortsatta utvecklingen i enlighet med Elmgrens rekommendation om sen differentiering. I linje med Elmgrens fortsatta arbete och vad som argumenterades för i den efterföljande Skolkommissionen (SOU 1948:27) gjorde dessutom starka influenser från psykologins område sin entré på utbildningsområdet. Detta grundade sig både i tanken att med hjälp av kvantifierbara principer inklusive psykometri möjliggöra objektiva mätningar av elevers förmåga, och ett kategoriserande av elever enligt normalfördelningskurvan. Enligt förslaget skulle skolpsykologer introduceras som en del av skolans medicinska personal, där för att observera och diagnostisera elever. Mätmetoderna som tillämpades var dock aldrig menade att identifiera elever från ett fullt spektrum av förmågor och hur dessa kunde stimuleras. I stället var tanken att identifiera avvikelser för att kunna korrigera dessa. Betydelsen det fick för lärarrollen var ett ökat fokus på elever i ett antal olika riskkategorier, snarare än att fungera på två fronter i betydelse både stötta elever i riskkategorier och utmana särskilt begåvade.

En annan influens från 1940-talet och framåt återfanns i John Dewey, i pragmatism och i utbildning som demokratisk. Detta innebar att ytterligare

argument hävdades mot organisatorisk differentiering och i stället för kollektivet där grupparbete framställdes som den naturliga arbetsformen. Som en konsekvens uppmanades eleverna att anpassa sin prestation efter gruppens förmåga. I dokumenten från 1950-talet kom varningar för att som lärare ställa för höga krav på elevernas prestationer. Den korrelation som argumenten byggde på kopplade samman motivation med ett undvikande av svårigheter eftersom dessa kunde leda till känslor av misslyckande. I kontrast till att handleda eleverna i hur sådana känslor kan hanteras tilldelades läraren rollen att se till att sådana känslor aldrig uppstod.

1962, när parallellskolesystemet slutligen slogs samman, betonades i stället för differentiering behovet av en individualiserad undervisning. Till att börja med erbjöds kurser av två olika svårighetsgrader, en grundkurs och en överkurs, senare allmän och särskild kurs, och fria tillval var tänkta som komplement till den reguljära undervisningen. Genom reformarbetet fortskridande försvann dock betoningen på dessa alternativ som ett sätt att utmana elever och medan strategier kom att finnas kvar så var det utan att vara direkt kopplade till särskilt begåvade elever. Samtidigt knöts lärarens uppmärksamhet ännu mer till elever i svårigheter och de uppmanades att lämna andra elever till att arbeta på egen hand, antingen genom 'tysta övningar' i klassrummet eller genom hemuppgifter.

Den senare perioden, som sträcker sig från 1969 till idag, inleddes med en stark betoning på ett antal olika sätt som elever kan uppleva undervisning som motivationssänkande. I stor utsträckning tillskrevs sådana upplevelser orsaker beroende på att undervisningen var för svår och för krävande. Ansvaret lades därför på läraren att se till att motivera eleverna genom att förenkla, genom att undvika abstraktioner och erbjuda flertalet möjligheter till repetition. Nyckelord som kännetecken för utbildning blev trygghet och trivsel och tanken om individualisering tog mera och mer formen av anpassningar i form av specialundervisning till 'elever i svårigheter'.

I de efterföljande reformerna begränsades eleverna till två kategorier avseende förmåga, antingen 'elever' i allmänhet eller 'elever i behov av stöd för att klara målen'. Från 2009 syns dock något av en återgång till mer differentierande strukturer. Ett första exempel återfinns i införandet av spetsutbildningar. Ett andra exempel finns från 2010 den senaste stora utbildningsreformen genomfördes. En ny elevkategori infördes då i Skollagen (2010:800) i form av 'elever som lätt når de kunskapskrav som minst ska uppnås'. Motiveringen bakom denna nya kategorisering återfinns dock inte i själva lagtexten utan i den bakomliggande propositionen (Proposition 2009/10:165). Där står att läsa hur alla elever ska ha rätt till en undervisning som är stimulerande, som möjliggör att de kan nå sin fulla potential och att förväntan på elevens prestation ska sträcka sig längre än till att nå en godkänd nivå. Om de elever som befinner sig över nivån att lätt klara de krav som minst ska uppnås nämndes dock ingenting i dokumenten.

Förutom skolstadgor, läroplaner och kursplaner omfattade textanalysen även samtida dokument från de tre stora skolmyndigheterna, Skolverket, Skolinspektionen och SPSM som direkt relaterar till särskild begåvning. Här går argumenten isär, både vad det gäller kategoriseringen av elevgruppen och vilka roller lärarna ska spela i förhållande till dessa. Skolverket har publicerat två rapporter av intresse. Den första, från 2012, är skriven som respons på krav som ställdes på svenska utbildning från internationellt håll. Dels hänvisas till ett krav på att förbättra undervisningen för högpresterande eftersom dessa elever tappat i resultat i internationella kunskapsmätningarna TIMSS, PISA och PIRLS. Dels kom 1994 en rekommendation från Europarådet, *Recommendation 1248*, att varje medlemsland bör se över på vilket sätt deras respektive utbildningssystem stöttar särskilt begåvade (gifted) elever och ser till att de utmanas. I rapporten från 2012 svarade Skolverket med vad som i avhandlingen tolkats som skepsis genom att hänvisa till att formuleringen 'lätt når de minsta kraven' redan tillgodoser dessa elever. Dessutom likställdes definitionen av särskild begåvning med högpresterande och något som enligt myndigheten alla elever kan uppnå med rätt stöd och motivation. I det andra dokumentet, *Särskild begåvning* (2015b) ger Skolverket med hjälp av undervisande lärare och forskare verksamma i Sverige rekommendationer både hur särskild begåvning under just den benämningen ska definieras, identifieras och undervisas i form av ett material tänkt att användas av skolor i fortbildande syfte. Det innebar att särskild begåvning som begrepp i kontrast till det tidigare dokumentet från 2012 erkändes officiell status av skolmyndigheten. I avhandlingens analys tolkas dock erkännandet med en stark betoning på särskilt begåvade elever i termer av diagnos, som i behov av psykologiskt stöd och i kontrast till normalitet.

Den avslutande delen av dokumentanalysen, i vilken SPSM den svenska myndighet som ansvarar för rådgivning avseende anpassningar, stödundervisning och särskilda behov ger dock inget annat stöd avseende särskild begåvning än att hänvisa till ett begränsat urval av andra källor. Skolinspektionen, å andra sidan representerar en avvikande inställning både i relation till Skolverket och till SPSM. Redan 2010 framförde myndigheten kritik mot hur skolor negligerar behoven av utmaningar genom ett alltför stort fokus på elevers tillkortakommanden och avsaknad av infrastruktur för att samarbeta runt högpresterande elever. Att dessa inkluderas i undervisningen är enligt Skolinspektionen en del av likvärdig utbildning (SFS2011:556, Skolinspektionen 2018a. Se också Skolinspektionens föreläggande avseende en särskilt begåvad elev 2018b, 2019).

Sammantaget resulterar textanalysen i tre slutsatser, dels att svensk utbildning genom en lång tradition har byggt fram en utjämnande utbildning där elever i särskild begåvningsklustret kommit att osynliggöras. Samtidigt finns stöd i styrdokumentet vad de gäller lämpliga undervisningsanpassningar men dessa är dolda under generella formuleringar. Dessutom ger de tre skolmyn-

digheterna olika vägledning vad lärares ansvar är i relation till särskild begåvning. Utrymme finns således för lärarna att agera men det bygger i stor utsträckning på att de gör egna tolkningar i skärningspunkten mellan 200 års policy och tre olika myndigheter rådgivning.

## Begreppsliggörandet av särskild begåvning som 'enactment'

I intervjuerna visade analysen att lärarnas möter både befämjande (enabling) och begränsande (constraining) faktorer i sitt arbete med särskild begåvning. I avsaknad av stöd i policy visade sig i stället stöd av rektor få stor betydelse för de nationella lärarna som en 'embodiment of policy' (Ball et al. 2012). De nationella lärarna visade sig möjliga att göra olika anpassningar, etablera samarbete i frågor rörande särskild begåvning med kollegor och andra stadier i utbildningssystemet. Å andra sidan stötte lärarna på motstånd, främst inom tre områden. Genom att uttalat stöd saknas i policydokumenten kännetecknades agerandena dels av en brist på kontinuitet och snabba förändringar även inom korta tidsperioder, som till exempel från ett skolår till nästa. Här ges exempel i intervjudata på hur samarbeten bryts genom att kolleger och skolledare byter arbetsplats. För det andra kunde lärarnas satsningar framstå som godtyckliga vilket resulterade i motstånd från kolleger mot att samarbeta och att acceptera samma uppfattning om särskild begåvning. Här förekom även tecken på samma tolkning av satsningar på särskild begåvning i termer av elitism som påpekats i tidigare forskning. För det tredje, lokaliserade lärarnas 'enactments' till det individuella klassrummet, eller den enskilda skolan, men visade sig svåra att överföra när eleverna flyttade till en ny lärare eller en ny skola. Komplexitet återfanns även i förhållande till det sistnämnda när eleverna betygsattes. Även om undervisningen bestod i mer utmaningar testades och betygsattes eleverna i enlighet med den läroplan de borde följa enligt biologisk ålder. Det betyder att en känslig punkt identifierades i själva övergångsfaserna. Slutsatser i tidigare forskning och i textanalysen fick därför ytterligare bekräftelse.

Jämförelsevis hittade både lärarna inom IB- och spetsurvalen stöd i sina respektive styrdokument för att erbjuda mer utmaningar och att de förväntades att göra så. Det betydde att de båda senare lärargruppernas ageranden framstod som mindre känsliga för förändringar och mindre beroende av personliga faktorer än vad som var fallet för de nationella lärarna. Å andra sidan erfor spetslärarna även brist på kontinuitet eftersom spetsutbildningarna ännu inte permanenteras. Trots att nästan 15 år gått sedan spets först infördes betraktas de fortfarande som att befinna sig på försöksstadiet. Vad IB-lärarna och spetslärarna har gemensamt med de nationella lärarna är också i begränsningar i övergången mellan utbildningarna. Liksom med de nationella utbildningarna fun-

gerar anpassningarna inom varje system men tas inte med nödvändighet tillvara när eleverna flyttar över till nästa steg i utbildningen, det vill säga till universitetet. Betygsättning är ett annat område där komplexitet uppstår. Å IB:s vägnar eftersom betygen räknas om för att passa den svenska betygsskalan, å spetsutbildningens vägnar eftersom betygen har samma värde som för de reguljära kurserna trots annat innehåll. Inget av system synliggjorde den utökning i svårighetsgrad som eleverna genomgår i sina studier.

I lärarnas 'enactment' genom undervisning återfanns ett flertal av de anpassningar som Rogers (2007) och Tomlinson (1996) nämner. Eleverna accelererades och erbjöds berikningar, nivågruppering användes och eleverna flyttades vidare i stället för att hållas tillbaka. I motsats till en förväntan att eleverna skulle arbeta på egen hand parallellt med den undervisning som pågick återfanns de utmanande aspekterna i centrum av undervisningen. Inom spetsutbildningen ingår accelerering i kursstrukturen men även berikning genom en betoning på forskning, användandet av kurslitteratur för universitetet, tillgång till mästartklasser (master classes) och samarbete med professionella musiker och orkestrar. Även IB-utbildningen bygger på accelerering och nivågruppering och berikning ingår för samtliga elever. Ett exempel återfanns i beskrivningen av lärarnas undervisning i Theory of Knowledge (ToK) där eleverna utmanades till kritiskt tänkande i kontrast till stoffinläring. Ett annat exempel var Creativity, Action Service (CAS) där eleverna förväntades svara för sin personliga utveckling och att anta utmaningar med betoning på kreativitet, fysisk aktivitet och samhällstjänande åtaganden. Alla tre urval av lärare visade även genom sina exempel hur utmanande undervisning behöver arbeta för attitydförändringar. Dels återfanns det i förväntan både från lärare och från eleverna själva vad det gäller prestation för att undvika möjligheter till underprestation och dels genom att inte anpassa till elevernas förmåga utan förvänta sig att eleverna antog de ökade kraven.

Lärarna i den nationella utbildningen inkluderades i studien på grundval av de direkta referenser de gör till särskilt begåvade elever. En konsekvens av detta blev att särskilt begåvade elever utgjorde en egen kategori i de nationella lärarnas sätt att definiera och identifiera särskild begåvning. Den mest framträdande egenskap särskilt begåvade elever tillskrevs var snabb inläring. Samtidigt återfanns delar av en medikaliseringssdiskurs i hur eleverna relaterades i termer av diagnos, ett fokus på deras emotionella mående och till psykologer som den som utreder och identifierar eleverna. I urvalet av nationella lärare fanns även referenser till kvantifiering i form av IQ-test och användningen av standardiserade prov för att identifiera elever. Test användes även för att berättiga lärarnas uppfattningar av elevernas särskilda begåvning även om testen inte konstruerats utifrån ett sådant syfte.

I kategoriseringen av elever å IB-lärarnas och spetslärarnas sida användes inte begreppet särskilt begåvade trots att lärarna, med ett undantag, hade kännedom om begreppet. Därigenom skildes de undervisningsanpassningar som

dessa lärare gjorde från begreppet särskild begåvning. Samtidigt exemplifierade både IB-lärarna och spetslärarna undervisning utifrån de principer som Rogers (2007) och Tomlinson (1996) förespråkar för att utmana eleverna. Lärarna undervisade med hjälp av accelerering, berikning på en hög nivå av komplexitet, utmanande innehåll och de beskrev användandet av öppna frågor avsedda att få eleverna att tänka och inte bara lära in.

Som svar på den första och den andra forskningsfrågan rörande konceptualisering av särskild begåvning i policy som text och som 'enactment', när data från intervjuerna med de nationella lärarna analyserades framträdde flera olika former av 'enactment'. Lärarna *lånade* från alternativa källor vilket möjliggjorde att de kunde göra anpassningar. De *omdefinierade* sina roller som lärare för att inkludera även särskilt begåvade elever och satte dessa i centrum för undervingen. De *omdefinierade* redan existerande strukturer och återinförde differentierade undervisningspraktiker där uppgifterna var differentierade men inte eleverna. Slutligen så *omdefinierade* de betydelsen av likvärdighet genom att inte acceptera en motsättning mellan att uppmärksamma elever i behov av stöd och erkänna elever i särskild begåvningskategorin.

Jämförelsevis är policytexter som reglerar IB-utbildningen konstruerade utifrån en annan rationalitet vilken betonar vikten av att erbjuda en utmanande utbildning. I relation till nationell utbildningsdiskurs *omdefinierade* IB och spetslärarna kategoriseringen av eleverna genom att undvika beskrivningar av avvikelser och utsatthet, genom att inte relatera till sina respektive elever med grund i en sådan terminologi samtidigt som de undervisade med hjälp av anpassningar lämpade för särskilt begåvade elever. Genom detta är det möjligt att säga att IB och spetsutbildningarna erbjöd vad Borland (2005) beskriver som "gifted education without gifted children". Styrdokumentet inom IB argumenterar dessutom för utbildning som *androgogik* – undervisning för vuxna i kontrast till *pedagogik* - undervisning av barn och ett betonande av risktagande som en del av lärande. Slutligen *omdefinierade* IB och spetslärarna betydelsen av elitism genom att neka en ekonomisk definition. I stället *omformulerade* de meningen av elitism i utbildning till att infatta vad som beskrivs som en tillåtelse att få vara målmedveten och satsa på sin utbildning.

## Slutsatser: särskild begåvning som diskurs

Med den tredje och fjärde forskningsfrågorna rörande rationaliteter och spänningar i fokus så är det möjligt att konstatera att en typ av rationalitet som framträdde bygger på psykologiska mätmetoder vilket enligt de slutsatser som dras i avhandlingen har haft en direkt påverkan på hur särskild begåvning positionerats inom nationell utbildningsdiskurs. Det är också där det visade sig möjligt att identifiera ytterligare ett spänningsförhållande till det som redan identifierats mellan jämlikhet och excellens, den mellan normalitet och avvikelser. Till en början osynliggörs särskilt begåvade elever i policytexterna i

form av en 'undantryckt kunskap' (subjugated knowledge) eftersom de anses som redan privilegierade och därigenom som att vara i opposition till ett rättvist skolsystem byggt för ett utjämnande mål. Dessutom sker detta eftersom fokus i undervisningen ligger på elever som är identifierade som i behov av stöd från läraren till vilka särskilt begåvade elever inte har räknats. Detta gör att vissa skillnader inom elevgruppen ges en röst medan andra inte. Å andra sidan argumenterar avhandlingen för förekomsten av en redan etablerad psykologisering och medikalisering, en patologisering av det normala och ett skapande av avvikelse som kommit att omfatta även särskilt begåvade elever i och med kategoriseringar i termer av risk, brist och tillkortakommanden. På detta sätt görs utbildning till en metod att bota elever – i avhandlingen uttryckt i begreppet 'meducation'.

En annan typ av rationalitet i samband med den första är uppfattningen av innebörden av likvärdighet, rättvisa och excellens vilket manifesteras i ett tredje identifierat spänningsförhållande, det mellan individualism kontra kollektivism. Exempel från textanalysen visar hur läroplaner har kalibrerats enligt antaganden om vad en normal elev normalt kan förväntas att prestera (Lundahl 2006) och kraven på all utbildning av lika värde tänkt att utsudda skillnader (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006). Enligt denna tankemodell förväntas eleverna att likna varandra och att utbildning organiseras i enlighet med detta. Detta spänningsförhållande har samma effekt som det första, nämligen att elever som manifesterar aspekterna i klusterbegreppet ses som avvikande. Det innebär att analysen exemplifierar ett flertal exempel på vad Foucault kallar 'särskiljande praktiker' (dividing practices) där grupper kategoriseras genom att urskiljas från en gemensam helhet, identifieras, normaliseras och hierarkiseras (Foucault 1995).

Slutligen, utifrån den data som redovisats i avhandlingen hävdas att parallellskolesystemet inte upphörde i början av 1960-talet genom förenandet i en gemensam obligatorisk grundskola. I stället förflyttades strukturer för att utmana och erkänna särskilt begåvade elever under ytan. Exempel som stödjer ett sådant resonemang återfanns både i det sätt eleverna kategoriseras och på vilka grunder undervisningsanpassningar bör göras och förväntningar på lärarrollen. De tre grupperna av lärare utmanar tillsammans en sådan utbildningsdiskurs genom att synliggöra den särskilt begåvade eleven i undervisningen men utan ett elitistiskt perspektiv. Kategoriseringen av särskild begåvning är komplex vilket lyfts i avhandlingens inledande del. En del av den logik som svensk utbildningsdiskurs tycks bygga på är tanken att differentiering kan lösas om inga skillnader mellan elevernas förmåga nämns.

Avslutningsvis konstaterades i avhandlingen att genom att undvika att nämna särskild begåvning och en utmanande undervisning i utbildningssystemet lämnas eleverna till att antingen anpassa sin förmåga till den undervisning som erbjuds, vilket betyder att upprepa förmågor som de redan har, eller att söka sig till andra utbildningsmöjligheter som ger dem utmaningar. I resurs-

starka familjer kan det innebära att bekosta privatundervisning, utbildning utomlands eller att föräldrarna själva undervisar sina barn, möjligheter som saknas i mera resurssvaga familjer. Därigenom bidrar skolsystemet till att befästa det ojämlika förhållande det satt sig själv att förhindra, i stället för att fungera som en garant för att elever från olika bakgrunder får blomstra i sitt lärande. Avhandlingen avslutas med en referens till Margaret Sutherland och Niamh Stack (2014) som förenar inkludering och särskild begåvning genom att i stället för ett behovsperspektiv prata om ett rättighetsperspektiv vilket betonar hur mångfald och olikhet inte ska förnekas utan hyllas.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Letter of Consent National Education Teachers



UPPSALA  
UNIVERSITET

Mitt namn är Caroline Sims och jag är doktorand vid institutionen för utbildningsvetenskaper vid Uppsala universitet. Fokus för min forskning ligger på utmanande undervisning för elever som redan kommit mycket långt i sin utveckling, ibland kallade särskilt begåvade.

Nu är jag intresserad av dina erfarenheter av att arbeta utifrån ett sådant perspektiv och skulle vara tacksam om du väljer att delta i min studie. I så fall innebär det att du ger mig möjlighet att intervjua dig om ditt arbete med dessa elever. Dessutom skulle jag vilja få tillgång till olika typer av undervisningsmaterial så som arbetsuppgifter och provfrågor till eleverna.

Intresset hos mig ligger alltså i att fånga det du redan gör i din vardag. Intervjuerna med dig kommer att ljudinspelas. Det inspelade materialet utgör endast grund för transkribering där all information om vem du eller eleverna är, eller vilken skola du arbetar på kommer att aidentifieras i analysen och vid publicering. Dina svar och dina resultat kommer att behandlas så att inga obehöriga kan ta del av dem. Deltagandet är frivilligt och kan när som helst avbrytas utan att vidare motivering till detta efterfrågas.

Ansvarig för dina personuppgifter är Uppsala universitet. Enligt EU:s dataskyddsförordning har du rätt att kostnadsfritt få ta del av de uppgifter om dig som behandlas i studien, och vid behov få eventuella fel rättade. Du kan också begära att uppgifter om dig raderas samt att behandlingen av dina personuppgifter begränsas. Om du vill ta del av uppgifterna ska du kontakta professor Claes Nilholm. Om du är missnöjd med hur dina personuppgifter behandlas har du rätt att ge klagomål till Datainspektionen, som är tillsynsmyndighet.

Här med godkänner jag mitt deltagande och användningen av dess resultat i enlighet med vad som nämnts ovan:

Ort och datum

Namn

---

Caroline Sims caroline.sims@edu.uu.se mobil: xxx-xxxxxxx  
Professor Claes Nilholm claes.nilholm@edu.uu.se mobil: xxx-xxxxxxx

## Appendix 2: Letter of Consent IB Programme Teachers



UPPSALA  
UNIVERSITET

My name is Caroline Sims and I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Education at Uppsala University. My research focuses on options within Sweden for students who would benefit from a more challenging education; that is, students who have got far in their thinking and need to be stretched further. Whilst the International Baccalaureate caters for a broad range of student abilities, international research identifies it as providing additional challenges appropriate to this group of students, hence my interest in the IB.

I am interested in your experiences in working within the IB and would be very happy if you would be willing to participate in a few individual on-line interviews and provide a sample of your teaching material such as assessments, instructions and hand-outs.

The interviews will be recorded, but used only as a foundation for transcription. On publication, all information about your identity and place of work will be anonymized and your responses will only be accessible to authorized persons. Participation in the study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any point without further explanation.

Uppsala University is responsible for any data about your identity. According to the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) you are entitled to any information given about you as part of the study and to have any corrections made free of charge. You can also request that any personal information be deleted, or restrict the use of such personal data. If you would like to get access to your data, please contact Professor Claes Nilholm. If you are dissatisfied concerning the treatment of your personal data, you are entitled to inform the supervisory authority Datainspektionen.

I hereby give my consent to participate in the study and to the treatment of the results in agreement with the abovementioned:

Place and Date

Name

---

Caroline Sims caroline.sims@edu.uu.se mobil: xxx-xxxxxxx  
Professor Claes Nilholm claes.nilholm@edu.uu.se mobil: xxx-xxxxxxx

## Appendix 3: Letter of Consent Peak Programme Teachers



UPPSALA  
UNIVERSITET

Mitt namn är Caroline Sims och jag är doktorand vid institutionen för utbildningsvetenskaper vid Uppsala universitet. Fokus för min forskning ligger på utmanande undervisning för elever som redan kommit mycket långt i sin utveckling.

Nu är jag intresserad av dina erfarenheter av att arbeta utifrån ett spetsutbildningsperspektiv och skulle vara tacksam om du väljer att delta i min studie. I så fall innebär det att du ger mig möjlighet att intervjua dig om ditt arbete med dessa elever. Dessutom skulle jag vilja få tillgång till olika typer av undervisningsmaterial så som arbetsuppgifter och provfrågor till eleverna.

Intresset hos mig ligger alltså i att fånga det du redan gör i din vardag. Intervjuerna med dig kommer att ljudinspelas. Det inspelade materialet utgör endast grund för transkribering där all information om vem du eller eleverna är, eller vilken skola du arbetar på kommer att avidentifieras i analysen och vid publicering. Dina svar och dina resultat kommer att behandlas så att inga obehöriga kan ta del av dem. Deltagandet är frivilligt och kan när som helst avbrytas utan att vidare motivering till detta efterfrågas.

Ansvarig för dina personuppgifter är Uppsala universitet. Enligt EU:s dataskyddsförordning har du rätt att kostnadsfritt få ta del av de uppgifter om dig som behandlas i studien, och vid behov få eventuella fel rättade. Du kan också begära att uppgifter om dig raderas samt att behandlingen av dina personuppgifter begränsas. Om du vill ta del av uppgifterna ska du kontakta professor Claes Nilholm. Om du är missnöjd med hur dina personuppgifter behandlas har du rätt att ge klagomål till Datainspektionen, som är tillsynsmyndighet.

Här med godkänner jag mitt deltagande och användningen av dess resultat i enlighet med vad som nämnts ovan:

Ort och datum

Namn

---

Caroline Sims caroline.sims@edu.uu.se mobil: xxx-xxxxxxx  
Professor Claes Nilholm claes.nilholm@edu.uu.se mobil: xxx-xxxxxxx

## Appendix 4: Aide-mémoire Interviews

### **Background School Data**

- Short history of school/setting
- Number of years in offering teaching with a gifted perspective/the IB Programme/ The Peak Programme
- School form as council based or free school
- Level(s) of education offered
- Existence of First teachers/lectors within the school
- Responsibilities of First teachers/lectors within the school
- Total number of students
- Number of students included taught with a gifted perspective/taught in the IB Programme/ taught in the Peak Programme

### **Teachers' Background and Qualifications**

- General teacher qualification
- Years of experience in teaching
- Subject qualification/experiences
- Years of experience in teaching gifted students/teaching in the IB/teaching in the Peak Programme
- Background into involvement in teaching with a gifted perspective/teaching in the IB Programme/teaching in the Peak Programme including on whose initiative.
- Additional qualification in teaching with a gifted perspective/teaching in the IB/teaching in the Peak Programme - what these are, how they were attained and on whose initiative.

### **Resource Allocation**

- Collaboration with colleagues/collaboration with other agents than teachers
- Collaboration within school unit
- Collaboration external to school unit
- Additional support to teach with a gifted perspective/teaching in the IB/teaching in the Peak Programme
- First teachers connected to teaching with a gifted perspective/teaching in the IB/teaching in the Peak Programme
- Additional salary for teaching with a gifted perspective/teaching in the IB/teaching in the Peak Programme
- Additional time allocation for teaching with a gifted perspective/teaching in the IB/teaching in the Peak Programme

- Application of teaching adjustments such as enrichment, acceleration, competitions, ability grouping, time-table adjustments, mentoring
- Attitudinal responses to the schools' involvement in teaching with a gifted perspective/teaching in the IB/teaching in the Peak Programme

### **Teaching Adjustments**

- Content, methods, and structure of teaching adjustments such as enrichment, acceleration, competitions, ability grouping, time-table adjustments, mentoring

### **Definition and Identification Procedure National Education Teachers**

- Definition of giftedness
- The use of identification methods by school and/or by the individual teacher
- The role of identification for resource allocation

### **Definition and Identification Procedure IB Programme/Peak Programme**

- Characteristics of students in the IB Programme/Peak Programme
- Admission requirement/procedures to study the IB Programme/Peak Programme
- Knowledge of the giftedness concept
- Definition of giftedness
- Relation between the giftedness concept and teaching in the IB/teaching in the Peak Programme

# Appendix 5: Survey Teaching with a Gifted Perspective

1. [Efternamn], [Förnamn]

[Efternamn], [Förnamn]

[Adress]

[Postnummer] [Stad]



Lärares arbete utifrån ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv

Följande enkät är del av ett avhandlingsprojekt vid **Uppsala universitet** tillsammans med **Högskolan i Gävle**, och riktar sig till dig som undervisar elever som anses särskilt begåvade. I enkäten används uttrycket ett 'särskilt begåvningsperspektiv' för att syfta på dessa elever. Vad som menas är alltså att du medvetet arbetar och undervisar utifrån att dessa elever finns i din undervisning, även om en identifiering enligt någon särskild metod kanske inte har gjorts.

Syftet med enkäten är att kartlägga hur du arbetar, vilka förutsättningar du har för att genomföra de anpassningar du anser vara nödvändiga och vilka förutsättningar din skola erbjuder för att uppmärksamma även dessa elever.

Enkäten som beräknas att ta ca 20 minuter att besvara är indelad i 5 delar:

A: Skolkontext

B: Lärarbakgrund

C: Identifikation

D: Resurstilldelning & undervisningslösningar

E: Sammanfattande kommentarer

Du har 14 dagar på dig att svara på enkäten. När du är klar kommer den att automatiskt mejlas tillbaka till mig när du klickar på 'skicka'. Eftersom jag vill ha möjlighet att följa upp dina svar i form av en intervju är du i detta fall inte anonym. Andra personer kommer dock inte att kunna se dina svar och de kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt och anonymiseras när data presenteras i forskningsprojektet. Du har också när som helst rätt att avbryta din medverkan utan att behöva ge någon vidare förklaring till detta.

Om du har några frågor är du mer än välkommen att kontakta mig,

Caroline Sims, doktorand i pedagogik

[caroline.sims@edu.uu.se](mailto:caroline.sims@edu.uu.se)

Mobil: 076-210 09 48



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### Så här fyller du i pappersenkäten

Nedan ser du hur du markerar ett svarsalternativ, och hur du avmarkerar ett redan gjort val.

Korrekt markerat svarsalternativ

Inkorrekt markerat svarsalternativ, krysset ska vara mitt i rutan

Inkorrekt markerat svarsalternativ, krysset är alltför kraftigt

Ångrat val, svarsalternativet räknas inte som markerat



### A:Skolkontext

Nedan följer ett antal inledande frågor om skolans styrning och inriktning.

#### 1. Ungefär vilket år startade skolan sin verksamhet?

#### 2. I vilken regi bedrivs skolan?

Kommunal

Friskola

Annan

Kommentar

#### 3. Vilka skolformer ingår i skolans verksamhet?

Grundskola (F-6)

Grundskola (7-9)

Fritidshem

Gymnasieskola yrkesförberedande

Gymnasieskola högskoleförberedande

Nationella program

Internationella program

Annat

Kommentar

#### 4. Ungefär hur många elever finns i skolans verksamhet?



5. Följer samtliga elever nationella kursplaner? Om inte, ange vilka kursplaner eleven omfattas av.

Ja

Nej

Vet ej

Kommentar

6. Har skolan någon speciell pedagogisk inriktning? I så fall vilken?

Ja

Nej

Vet ej

Kommentar

7. Erbjuder skolan Spets-utbildning enligt godkännande från Skolverket? I så fall, ange inriktning i kommentarfältet.

Ja

Nej

Vet ej

Kommentar

### **B: Lärarbakgrund**

Här följer ett antal frågor om din utbildning, vad du menar med särskild begåvning och om bakgrunden till att du undervisar utifrån ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv.



**8. Vilken utbildning har du?**

- Svensk lärarutbildning F-3
- Svensk lärarutbildning 4-6
- Svensk lärarutbildning 7-9
- Svensk lärarutbildning 1-7
- Svensk lärarutbildning 4-9
- Svensk lärarutbildning gymnasiet
- Svensk speciallärarutbildning
- Svensk specialpedagogutbildning
- Lärarutbildning från annat land (ange från vilket i kommentarsfältet)
- Annan utbildning (ange i kommentarsfältet)

Kommentar

**9. Vilka ämnen undervisar du i?**

**10. Hur definierar du särskild begåvning?**

**11. Vad innebär det enligt ditt sätt att se att undervisa med ett särskilt begåvningsperspektiv?**



**12. På vems initiativ undervisar du med ett särskilt-begåvningsperspektiv?**

- Mitt eget
- Skolledningens
- Huvudmannens
- Vårdnandshavare
- Läkares/skolpsykologs
- Eleven själv
- Annat

Kommentar

**13. Hur länge har du undervisat med ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv?**

**14. I vad undervisar du med ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv?**

**15. Hur många elever undervisar du utifrån ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv?**

**16. Har du någon särskild utbildning för att undervisa utifrån ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv? I så fall vilken? (om nej gå vidare till fråga 21)**

- Ja
- Nej

Kommentar

**17. Vad är det för utbildning?**



**18. I vems regi genomfördes denna utbildning?**

- Fortbildning genom huvudman
- Universitetsutbildning
- Nätverk
- Annat

Kommentar

**19. Hur lång var utbildningen?**

**20. Vem betalade för utbildningen?**

- Skolan
- Huvudman
- Jag själv
- Annan (ange vem)

Kommentar

**C: Identifikation**

I den här delen av enkäten följer frågor om de elever som omfattas av undervisningen utifrån särskild begåvning identifieras på något sätt, hur detta i så fall går till och av vem.

**21. Tillämpar skolan någon metod för att identifiera elever utifrån ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv?**

- Ja
- Nej
- Vet ej

Kommentar



22. Tillämpar du personligen någon metod för att identifiera de elever som är i behov av undervisningslösningar utifrån ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv? (om nej-gå vidare till fråga

Ja

Nej

Kommentar

23. Vad baseras i så fall identifikationen på? (flera alternativ är möjliga)

IQ-tester

Diagnos från psykolog

Diagnos från läkare

Rektors bedömning

Vittnesmål från vårdnadshavare

Andra lärares bedömning

Min egen bedömning

Elevens betyg/resultat

Annat

Kommentar

#### D: Resurstilldelning & undervisningslösningar

I den här delen av enkäten hittar du frågor om vilka resurser du har till förfogande, både i form av övrig personal och organisatoriska sådan, för att undervisa utifrån ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv.



**24. Vilka yrkeskategorier på skolan är involverade i arbetet utifrån ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv?**

- Klasslärare
- Ämneslärare
- Speciallärare
- Specialpedagog
- Läkare
- Psykolog
- Kurator
- Mentor (annan än undervisande lärare)
- Skolledning
- Enbart du själv
- Annan

Kommentar

**25. Vilket pedagogisk stöd har skolan att tillgå i arbetet med ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv?**

- Rådgivning
- Kontakt med univerisitet
- Pedagogisk utredning
- Fortbildning
- Undervisningsstöd genom externa mentorer
- Undervisningsstöd från föräldrar med relevant expertis
- Undervisningsstöd från lärare från högre stadie av utbildning
- Forum för samarbete
- Läromedelsanpassning
- Schemaanpassning
- Läroplansanpassning
- Annat (ange i kommentarfältet)
- Inget av ovanstående

Kommentar



**26. Vilket pedagogiskt stöd har du personligen i ditt arbete med särskild begåvning?**

- Rådgivning
- Kontakt med universitet
- Internetsidor/diskussionsforum
- Nätverk
- Personliga kontakter
- Stöd från föräldrar
- Facebook-grupp, eller liknande
- Extra tid i tjänsten avsatt
- Inget stöd
- Annat

Kommentar

**27. Finns någon person på skolan eller i huvudmannens organisation som har ett övergripande ansvar för de elever som undervisas utifrån ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv? Ange vilken roll denna person har i så fall.**

- Ja
- Nej
- Vet ej

Kommentar

**28. Har elever på din skolenhet som omfattas av undervisning utifrån ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv rätt till särskilt stöd?**

- Ja
- Nej
- Vet ej

Kommentar



**29. Har elever på din skolenhet som omfattas av undervisning utifrån ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv resurser avsatta hos speciallärare/specialpedagog?**

- Ja  
 Nej  
 Vet ej

Kommentar

**30. Vilken betydelse uppfattar du att medicinsk diagnostisering har för att erhålla resurser för undervisning utifrån ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv?**

- Stor betydelse  
 Ganska stor betydelse  
 Ganska liten betydelse  
 Ingen betydelse  
 Vet ej

Kommentar



**31. Vilka alternativ erbjuds elever vid din skola utifrån ett särskild-begåvningsperspektiv?**

- Accelerering i form av snabbare tempo
- Accelerering i form av byte till högre stadium/skolform
- Berikning i form av universitetsstudier
- Berikning i form av annat innehåll inom ordinarie kursplan
- Berikning i form av innehåll utanför ordinarie kursplan
- Nivågruppering
- Extra aktiviteter efter skoltid
- Helgaktiviteter
- Lovskolor
- Mentorskontakt utifrån specialintresse
- Deltagande i tävlingar
- Annat

Kommentar

**32. Finns några separata undervisningsgrupper där eleverna som omfattas av det särskilda-begåvningsperspektivet får del av sin undervisning?**

- Ja
- Nej
- Vet ej

Kommentar



**33. Om ja, har gruppen någon speciell inriktning baserad på ett särskilt-begåvningsperspektiv inom något av följande:**

- Språk, litteratur eller skrivande
- Idrott
- Musik
- Naturvetenskap
- Matematik
- Filosofi/kritiskt tänkande
- Retorik
- Bild och skapande
- Drama
- Annat

Kommentar



**34. Hur vanliga är följande lösningar för elever utifrån ett särskilt-begåvningsperspektiv?**

	Mindre än 2 timmar i veckan	3-5 timmar i veckan	6-10 timmar i veckan	11-15 timmar i veckan	16-20 timmar	20 timmar eller mer	Inte aktuellt
Eleven får undervisning i särskild undervisningsgrupp	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eleven arbetar med annat material på egen hand i klassrummet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eleven arbetar med annat material på egen hand i annat rum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eleven får extra stöd av annan person i klassrummet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eleven får enskild undervisning av annan person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Kommentar

**E: Sammanfattande kommentarer**

Slutligen följer här 4 frågor där du ges utrymme att sammanfatta och kommentera din undervisning utifrån ett särskilt-begåvningsperspektiv.

**35. Enligt din uppfattning vilka är de tre största utmaningarna med att undervisa utifrån ett särskilt-begåvningsperspektiv?**

**36. Enligt din uppfattning, vad krävs för en framgångsrik undervisning enligt ett särskilt-begåvningsperspektiv?**

**37. Enligt din uppfattning, vilka är de tre största fördelarna som undervisningen utifrån ett särskilt-begåvningsperspektiv ger de elever som omfattas?**



38. Har du några övriga kommentarer som du vill ge?



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