REVISTA BRASILEIRA DE ALTAS HABILIDADES/SUPERDOTAÇÃO
ISSN: 2318-9274 (Online)
Volume 5 / Número 2/ Ano: 2023

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR FRANÇOYS GAGNÉ

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Who is Professor Françoys Gagné?

Professor Françoys Gagné is a native French-speaking, born in Montreal, Canada. He was professor of Psychology at Université du Québec à Montréal. The National Association for Gifted Children recognizes his Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent – DMGT – as one of the most important theoretical conceptions of talent and giftedness. Even though he has been retired from his professorship since 2001, professor Françoys Gagné keeps up writing international publishing. His last book, published in 2020, is called "Differentiating Giftedness from Talent: The DMGT Perspective on Talent Development". It explores the origins, development and applications of his model. Among the many awards he received, the last ones were: the International Award for Research, in 2021, from the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, and the Lifetime Achievement Award, in 2022, from the MENSA Education and Research Foundation. In Brazil, his ideas have been applied in Cedet, that stands for – Centro para Desenvolvimento do Potencial e Talento – a center founded by professor Zenita Güenther in 1993, in the city of Lavras, in Minas Gerais.

Tania Viana: Today, Professor Françoys Gagné is going to present his own ideas about the DMGT to us in two parts. The first part is theoretical: he will focus on DMGT as a unique conceptual model. The second one is about its practical implications.

Professor Françoys Gagné, my name is Tania Viana, from Brazil. I'd like to say how happy I am for this opportunity to listen and to learn from you, sir. I want to say this is a precious moment. I understand French is your first language, is it righ?

Françoys Gagné: Yeah.

Tania Viana: So, “Je vous souhaite la bienvienue”[1].

Françoys Gagné: “Merci beaucoup”[2].

Tania Viana: You should know you are always welcome in Brazil. Your work with talent and giftedness means a lot to us and you have a special place in our hearts.

Francoys Gagné: Thank you.

Francoys Gagné: Greetings from French-speaking Montreal in Canada. The title of my presentation, as you can see, announces a legacy. Indeed, I have reached the venerable age of 84 years and I have been involved for more than 45 years in the field of Talent Development, commonly (but incorrectly) called Gifted Education, thus, I am well aware that my professional career is coming to an end. This presentation aims to pinpoint some of the main ideas that I have fought for during that period of almost five decades. I selected ten themes most important to my heart, just enough to maintain a slow pace through the next fifty minutes with you. The first four slides, the first four focus on the DMGT – “Modelo Diferencial de Dotação e Talento”[3] – just the theory of talent development that has brought me international eminence. By the way, let me point out that I disagree with your use of “superdotação” and “superdotado” as translations for giftedness and gifted respectively. In English, we do not say “supergifted” or “supergiftedness”. We just say gifted and giftedness. So, the translation should be just “dotação” and “dotado”[4]. Now, back to my point. The more practical second half would address the modalities of effective academic talent development programs. You can see that I'm not talking about giftedness program, but academic talent development programs. I discuss all these themes in more detail in a recently published book, entitled *Differentiating Giftedness from Talent*. It is available on the Amazon website. I consider this volume as the synthesis, the bible of my professional productivity.

Let’s start with the theoretical framework, the DMGT. The most important word is “differentiating”, and this concept will be the subject of my first theme. I chose talent development as my field of study in the late 1970s. Well, probably before a majority of you were born. As I read the work of major thinkers in the field, I quickly discovered that I was entering a chaotic world. Here are some examples: first of all, I noticed the multiplicity of definitions for the term “giftedness*”*; this concept was really a catch-all. I also observed that most scholars in “gifted education” ignored the term “talent” in their professional writings; the terms “giftedness” and “gifted” monopolized the terminology. It was “gifted” everywhere. Thirdly, scholars used the term “giftedness” to represent, at the same time, two things: high intellectual potential and high academic achievement. In fact, the identification procedures for “gifted” students maintained this confusion by often combining IQ scores and measures of academic performance. You have to be both: a high potential and a high achievement. In short, in my eyes, it was a veritable Tower of Babel!

Through these readings, the idea of differentiating potentialities from achievements rapidly imposed itself. Here is a summary of my argument. My starting point is a well-known slogan: "Develop your full potential!" This slogan expresses a reality that we all acknowledge intuitively, namely that we all possess a diversity of potentialities that we will transform, more or less completely, or fully, into achievements. I chose this slogan for another very important reason. In its *Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, the United Nations chose this message to identify the primary mission of educational institutions. It is what Article 29 says:

[1] “Desejo-lhe as boas-vindas” em francês (N. do T.).
[2] “Muito obrigado” em francês (N. do T.).
[3] “Differentiating Model of Giftedness and Talent” em português (N. do T)
[4] Nas traduções do seu trabalho para a Língua Portuguesa, os termos usualmente conhecidos como “superdotação” e “superdotado”, são traduzidos como dotação e dotado, justamente a partir desta crítica.

"The education of the child shall be directed to (…) the development of the child's personality, talents, mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential."

In concrete terms, I adopted the concept of "aptitude" to represent the idea of potentiality. What are aptitudes? I define them as naturally developed abilities; I oppose them to "competencies" which correspond to systematically developed abilities or skills. For example, intellectual aptitudes are a set of naturally developed cognitive abilities that students use daily as their main tool to acquire academic competencies.

Higher intelligence will allow for easier and faster learning of these academic competencies. Aptitudes have important genetic roots, while competencies benefit significantly more from the learning environment. It is because of this genetic anchoring that I chose "giftedness" to represent outstanding aptitudes, reserving the term "talent" for outstanding competencies and skills. You are certainly familiar with the phenomenon of underachievement; it corresponds to a discrepancy between expected performance, the aptitude level, and actual performance, the acquired competencies. Well, "underachievement" is a perfect concretization of the DMGT: it represents giftedness without talent!

Now let me show you the visual summarization of the DMGT. This is the version I use in the Southern hemisphere[5], just where Brazilian Fortaleza[6] is situated. But maybe you are more accustomed to the one I use in the Northern Hemisphere. Here it is. First, note the two differentiating poles: the Aptitudes component on the left and the Competencies component on the right. These two poles anchor a central component: the Developmental process through which students transform their aptitudes into competencies. These three components of the DMGT form the basic trio of the developmental dynamic: developing one's full potential means maximizing the effectiveness of the learning process. In the case of academic talents, at right, the relevant aptitudes essentially belong to the intellectual domain at left. The DMGT has two additional components: intrapersonal and environmental catalysts, in the center, which I will introduce a bit later.

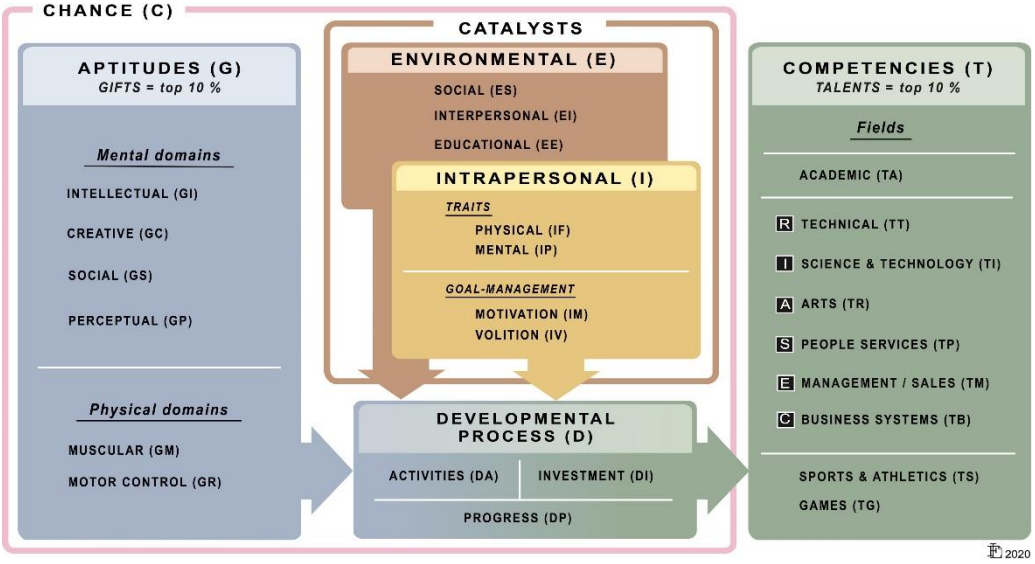

Figure 1. The DMGT (simplified version)

[5] In a joking tone, he places the model at the conference, upside down.
[6] City of Fortaleza-Ceará-Brazil.

Well, over the course of my career, I have been interviewed dozens of times by the media in several countries. I soon discovered that journalists usually asked the same two initial questions: first, “What is *giftedness?*”, and second, "How many are there?" My second theme aims to answer that second question. You may have noticed, at the top of the DMGT figure, left and right, that I have quantified giftedness and talent. The access threshold that I have chosen is the upper 10% of a reference population, both for aptitudes and for competencies. Why this choice of 10%? I will limit myself here to four brief observations. You will find in my book a complete chapter on this subject.

First, prevalence of gifted and talented is a subject that my colleagues largely leave aside. I really am the only one in gifted education to discuss it in detail. Yet, this is a very important issue, not just because of journalists' curiosity, but from a scientific as well as a practical point of view. I explain this in detail in my book. Two: there is no absolute answer, no magic number, to the question “how many are there?” It is the same for all the thresholds we use in our societies: speed limits, retirement age, overweight or obesity thresholds, wealth or poverty thresholds, etc. In short, all these thresholds are conventions; that is the result of a consensus between specialists.

Three: most psychologists and educators keep using a threshold of top 2% for intellectual giftedness, namely an IQ of 130 or more; it was proposed, believe it or not, a century ago. I believe the time has come in talent development to question the elitism of that threshold, which relegates 98% of the population to oblivion. Ask yourself: are young people who learn easily and quickly really so few in number? I don’t believe so. Four: it is precisely in reaction to this elitism that I have chosen a four-tier system — called MB for metric-based — with a minimum entry threshold of top 10%; this threshold allows me to multiply by five, no less, the population of the gifted and talented, from 2% to 10%. The other three levels are respectively: top one percent, very gifted or talented – in Brazilian Portuguese, I would say “superdotado”. And the top one in a thousand, exceptionally gifted or talented. And finally, the top one in ten thousand extremely gifted or talented. This system is simple, it is clear, and above all, I believe it is generous.

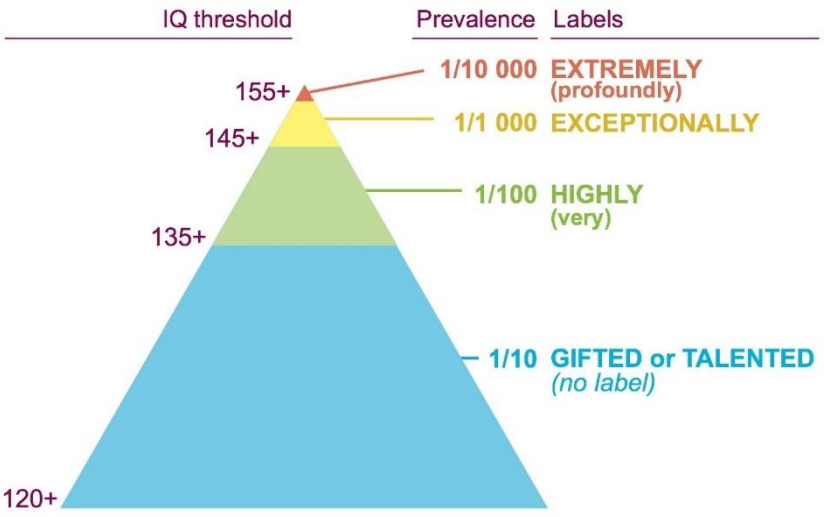

Figure 2. MB system of prevalence with four levels (gifts and talents)

Now, my third theme combines the first two to examine the practical impact in education of the differentiation between giftedness and talent. As I mentioned earlier, cognitive aptitudes are the preferred tool for acquiring academic competencies. It follows that intellectually gifted students have a better chance of acquiring an outstanding number of competencies, and thus of being judged academically talented. But, as we well know, not all gifted students are talented, and vice versa. If the gifted and talented populations overlap only partially, what is the percentage of that overlap? This figure shows three possible answers. Let's look at it more closely. The blue circles at the top represent the intellectually gifted group in an average school, which I labeled GI, gifted intellectual; they belong to the top 10% in terms of their IQ, which is a very good measure of intellectual aptitudes. The red circles at the bottom represent the top 10% in terms of academic achievement, those I call academically talented.

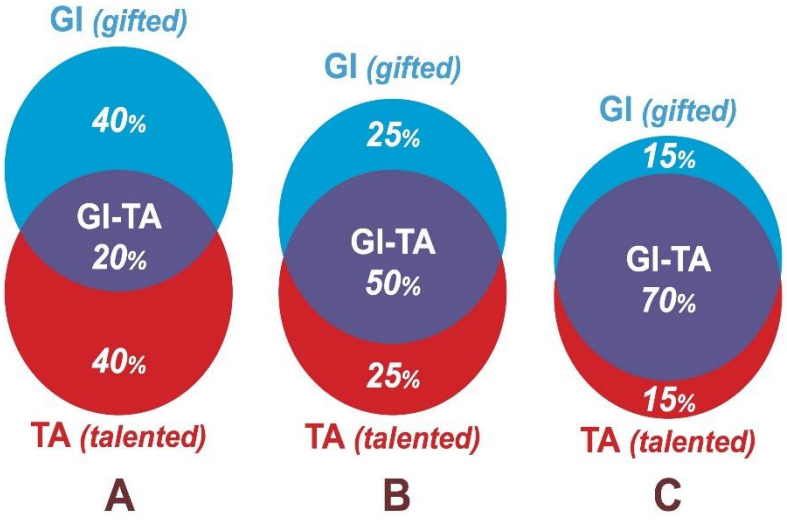

Figure 3. Degrees of overlap between gifted and talented populations

Together, the two circles represent the total population of gifted or talented students: blue gifted, and talented red. The violet zone, in the middle, represents the subgroup of gifted and the talented students simultaneously. So, recall my question about the percentage of overlap. Here it is again: of all the gifted or talented people, the blue and red circles, how many are simultaneously gifted and talented, the purple zone? This figure illustrates three possibilities: 20%, at left, 50%, in the middle, and 70% at right. Well, because of the strong correlation between IQ scores and school achievement, most educators spontaneously choose the 70% at right. They believe that most gifted students are also talented. But that is wrong. Indeed, research has shown that the real answer is 20%, not even 50%, 20% at left. In my book, I discuss this surprising result in detail. But try not to forget it.

So, let's look at it more closely, that answer of 20%. Keep in mind that these two circles represent the total population of gifted and/or talented students. As you can see, 40% of them are gifted but not talented; their achievements are below the top 10% threshold. Another 40% belongs to the talented group, but their cognitive aptitudes put them below the giftedness threshold of top 10%. Thus, only the 20% purple subgroup of these gifted or talented students can be, at the same time, labeled gifted and talented. These figures confirm the importance of differentiating between giftedness and talent; they overlap much less than is commonly thought. Well, I could say much more about this differentiation, but time forces me to move on.

My fourth theme is the dynamics of talent development, and I will introduce it with a question. Why is there so little overlap between cognitive aptitudes and academic performance? Well, the answer is very simple, and the DMGT figure illustrates it very well. Individual differences in academic competencies, at right, result from the combined influence of four groups of causal factors: first, cognitive aptitudes, component G, at left, a long-term learning process, component D, at the center bottom, and the constant influence, sometimes positive and sometimes negative, of two groups of catalysts, intrapersonal and environmental influences, components I and E in the middle top. Note the arrows indicating these influences on the developmental process.

These four causal agents play different roles. Aptitudes serve as both the tools and the building blocks. Here, cognitive aptitudes enable the acquisition of the knowledge and skills specific to the various school subjects. Then, component D thus becomes the mediating agent in the transformation of aptitudes into competencies, or of gifts into talents. Its main subcomponent, if you look at the bottom center, is investment – DI, namely engagement in the learning tasks – in the form of attention, concentration, effort, resilience and so forth. The I and E catalysts in the middle of the figure directly influence the developmental process, and consequently, the quantity and the quality of learning. For example, a number of personal characteristics can influence the degree to which students are engaging in their studies, just such as well their fluctuating level of interest for the various subject matters, or the presence of personality disorders, or their level of tenacity when facing obstacles, or their degree of autonomy, or their level of determination to bring their projects to full completion, and so on. There are many of them. At the environmental level, the quality and pace of teaching, the classroom climate, the parental support, and many other factors, will help or hinder academic progress. Time does not permit me to explore these dynamics in greater detail, but my book devotes four chapters to them.

I hope that, despite this brief overview, you will realize the multiplicity and complexity of the developmental scenarios generated by these five components, with their twenty or so subcomponents, and their countless facets. So, this has led me to summarize talent development as follows: each talent results from unique and complex choreographies involving a multitude of interactions between all components and subcomponents of the DMGT. So, keep in mind that this sentence implies that all talents are equally valid regardless of the choreography followed, that is even if this choreography does not include the presence of giftedness.

I had prepared two other themes around the DMGT, one on the role of genetics in the emergence of aptitudes, and the other on the importance of chance in the progression of talent. But time forces me to set them aside, almost completely, but as a closing comment for this more theoretical section, I have retained just one quote that, in some way, sums up these two themes. "All human accomplishments can be ascribed to two crucial throws of the dice over which no individual exerts any personal control: a first roll of the dice determines an individual's heredity" – so heredity is a chance factor – "and the other is formative environment". So, note that the genetic background, which is, unfortunately, unfortunately, too often underestimated by professionals in the human sciences will influence the elements within component G aptitudes and within component I intrapersonal catalysts. These two, G and I, are heavy with genetic background. The second roll will act on the elements of component E, the environmental catalysts. So, if you have found yourself in the right place at the right time, remain modest, because, in a significant way, you are simply the recipient of your gifts, your temperament, or your family environment. This concludes the first part of my talk.

Now we get into the second part of this presentation, the applied part. The first two themes, in this second part, will deal with the why, the reasons for an Academic Talent Development, which I say ATD program, while the other four will describe the how, the modalities of

implementation of that type of program. I have chosen, as my opening theme, the first and the most important law of learning.

Well, imagine any cohort of young students entering first grade. As you observe their school learning over the following months and years, you will observe two phenomena. First: all these pupils will progress in their mastery of the contents, meaning that the competencies of the group as a whole will grow fairly steadily, from month to month and year after year. In fact, school curricula have been designed to adjust more or less to the learning pace of average students, whatever that means. Secondly, individual students will progress at different paces, some of them a little or a lot slower than average, and others a little or a lot faster than average. In short, there are very few truly average students. Not many of them.

It is this dual phenomenon of group growth accompanied by significant individual differences that many researchers refer to as the first law of learning; others call it the fan spread effect. This figure illustrates the fan spread effect. It shows school years horizontally, and curriculum years vertically. First, the blue diagonal confirms the cohort's steady progression, one curriculum year for each year of schooling. After eight years, most students have mastered, at least to some extent, the eight years of their local curriculum.

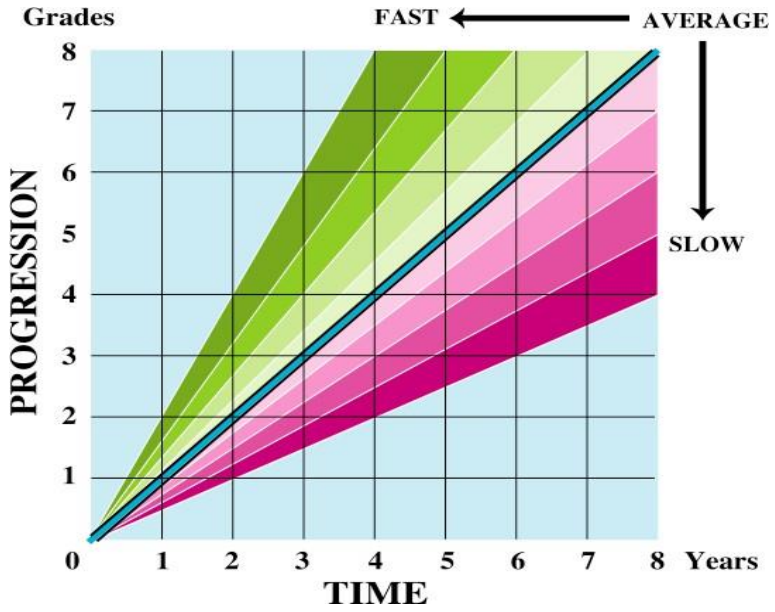

Figure 4. The dan spread effect

At the same time, the widening of the funnel, from bottom left to top right, creates the fan spread effect and it illustrates the impact of individual differences. Hence, the dispersion of competence levels; the slower students, the pink zone, fall further and further behind the core of the cohort, and vice versa for the faster ones, the green zone. Note also the significant differences within each color subgroup: they range from slightly slower progress, 7 years of curriculum mastered in 8 years, to very slow progress: only 4 years of mastery in 8 years, and vice versa. From 8 years of curriculum in 7 school years, that's the pale green. So, 7 years in 8 years, that's a little bit faster, to 8 years of curriculum in 4 school years. That's the deep green. Note that the extreme values of this range show a 4:1 ratio. The fastest learners are twice as advanced as others, while the slowest learners have progressed twice as slowly.

I am sure that you can think of students whose progress is twice as slow as normal, for example, students who reach the normal entry age for high school without having adequately mastered basic literacy and numeracy skills. These very slow learners do not go unnoticed! But you perhaps raised an eyebrow when I mentioned the possibility of a pathway twice as fast as normal. Completing primary school in 3 years instead of 6? For many of you it does not make sense. Well, indeed. When the means are there it does happen. I know, for example, a few students in my province, Quebec, who went through the 11 years of the elementary and high school system in just 6 years, almost twice the regular pace. Yes, 11 years of curriculum mastered in 6 years of schooling. And there are many more here like in every country, but still not as many as there should be! There are very few such prodigies in education because, as we will see, the school systems worldwide discourage accelerated progression. But, if you consider that many more do so in the arts and in sports, it is clear that thousands of students, around the world, could do the same academically, if they were given a chance.

Well, the fan spread effect looks great in theory, and that's my second theme. But we all know that the reality of our school systems is very different. For example, the green zone of the fan spread effect is virtually non-existent in any country. Why is that? Well, quite simply because its manifestation is subject to one important condition: the learning pace must be open. In other words, there must be no barriers to individual progression. This allows each learner to progress at his or her own pace, whatever fast or slow, thus maximizing the fan spread effect. Where do we find the best applications of the fan spread effect? Primarily in sports, where the development of the athletes' full potential is strongly encouraged and supported. Well, let me leave my text and just mention that I remember reading about very young boys in Brazil who were already identified as future exceptional soccer players, like Pelé in the old time. So, think about soccer or what you call football and the foot, and you will find that, in Brazil, very young boys are identified very early. Back to my text. It is also the case in the arts, particularly in music. That's why we so often see musical prodigies, young people who achieve professional mastery of their instrument before reaching adolescence. This is another example of a pace at least twice as fast as the average.

Well, open learning means no barriers on the pursuit of a maximum personal pace of learning. Yet education systems worldwide have been built around two main obstacles to this application. The first obstacle: there is the age/grade lockstep norm. Almost all students advance one degree per year, whatever their spontaneous learning pace. In other words, the vast majority of students follow the diagonal in the figure. There are very few grade skippers, those who would go in the green zone, and as few repeaters as possible, the pink ones. In Quebec, for example… here we are… the normal age/grade lockstep affects 90% of primary school children, those who stick to the diagonal, and the remaining 10% is mostly made up of repeaters. As for accelerants, most of the students in this meager 1% owe their advance to the Quebec program for early entry to school at age 5 or 6. In summary, the fan spread effect, especially in its green part, is virtually non-existent! And yet, many thinkers, starting with Aristotle, have stated unequivocally: "There is no greater injustice than to treat unequal individuals equally".

Now, the age/grade lockstep is compounded by the pace adopted by teachers in their classrooms. According to some U.S. studies, mentioned in my book, teachers mainly adjust their pace to students performing at around the 40th percentile, clearly below the group average. Why this slow pace? Well, it is to ensure the success – or should I say the lockstep progression – of as many students as possible. So, what happens to the students in the green zone, those whose learning pace is well above this average? Well, I'm not just talking about the top 10% talented, but about the 20% to 30% of students who achieve well above average. This significant minority spends a large part of their time in class twiddling their thumbs. And what's more, they will waste even more time since they will only progress by one grade the following year.

The absence of a true fan spread effect in educational systems around the world in no way

signifies a lack of above-average competencies. Rather, it means that our school systems do not offer learning conditions that are likely to create challenges and stimulate the students' motivation and volition. In so doing, they completely fall in their fundamental mission: which is to enable all their students to develop their full potential. Unfortunately, it's the talented students, those who make up our target clientele, who are the main victims. What a sad observation! In conclusion, if there is one fact that perfectly clarifies the why of an ATD, Academic Talent Development program, it is not only this increasing spread of academic competencies over the months and years in all cohorts of students, but, above all, the almost exclusive focus of teachers' interventions on students in the pink zone. So, how can we correct this profound inequity against talented students, who are prevented from developing their full potential? The solution can only be systemic, given the sheer number of such students, and must focus on group rather than individual clinical interventions. Indeed, the clinical approach can only offer a few drops of water in an ocean of needs.

Now, let's look at the how. Let's start with the educational philosophy that would guide that program. It would be based on a profound respect for individual differences in learning pace, as manifested in the fan spread effect. I did not invent that fundamental principle: I found it in the writings of an American educational philosopher, the late Professor Elliot Eisner from Stanford University. Here is a short excerpt from his ideas on appropriate learning conditions for all students, including the usually neglected talented ones.

First: "The kind of schools we need would not hold as an ideal that all students get to the same destinations at the same time" – that's basic – "Individuals come into the world with different aptitudes, and, over the course of their lives, they develop different interests and proclivities". Then, "In an ideal approach to educational practice [...] each youngster would learn at an ideal rate. [...] Over time, the cumulative gap between students would grow" – the dispersion of competencies would grow – "Students would travel at their own optimum rates, and some would go faster than others in different areas of work."

In this short extract, we have a clear description of a fan spread effect perfectly applied to all learners, both the slow pinks and the fast greens. Let us now focus on our special group of talented students. How should we structure their school activities to help them develop their mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential, as stipulated in a well-received article published some years ago, I proposed seven constituent elements of a true Academic Talent Development program, seven characteristics. But, for the purpose of this short presentation, I have selected the four most important ones in my view. The first two focus on that program's curriculum, while the other two deal with administrative modalities.

My first constituent element is the keystone of this program. It targets the enrichment of the curriculum; I am talking here about the regular curriculum offered by any local school system. The concept of enrichment is akin, similar to the fashionable – and also more politically correct concept of curriculum differentiation. Very popular word. But the term differentiation in the present context is imprecise; it has many different meanings, because it covers all students with special needs. The term enrichment is much more relevant when applied to talented students, because it identifies a type of differentiation especially adapted to their rapid or fast learning pace.

I describe in that article four types of enrichment. By far, the most important is enrichment in density, also called condensation or compacting of the curriculum. It involves, well, you guessed it, accelerating the pace of content coverage across subject matters. Why give it priority over other forms of enrichment? Quite simply because it offers the most relevant response to the key characteristic of talented students, namely their ease and speed of learning. Did you know, for example, that almost half the students in a typical classroom can, on the very first day of the school year, pass with success the exam they will be given at the end of that year? Yes,

almost half of them. Of course, they will all improve their competencies over the course of that year, but do they really need ten months to acquire the few unmastered competencies? Well, to ask the question is to answer it! And let me add that enrichment in density helps to correct the most acute problem that these students experience: the daily boredom caused by a teaching pace that is clearly too slow for them. Numerous evaluation studies have clearly demonstrated this sad phenomenon.

The second constituent element flows directly from the first. It is based on the fact that talented students do not demonstrate their rapid learning pace episodically. No, they show it every single day. Therefore, appropriate enrichment must provide intellectual challenges on a daily basis, in all subjects taught. The concept of "proximal zone of development", proposed, 50 years ago, by Lev Vygotsky aptly reflects this necessity to keep students' learning pace at the cutting edge of their aptitudes and interests.

This need for constant curriculum enrichment for pupils in the green zone will constitute a real challenge for teachers. And the challenge will grow over time as the competence gap within this group widens. And yet, this is a *sine qua non* condition for the full development of these students' potentialities. Indeed, a wide range within the green zone will be the best proof that the school system has achieved its mission of developing the full potential of its students. I will say it again: a wide range within the green zone will be the best proof that the school system has achieved its mission of developing the full potential of its students, especially its talented students. The challenge is quite different in the case of the slower students in the pink zone. Well, their difficult progress, often combined with behavioral problems, forces teachers to prioritize their needs. In other words, school systems consider far more important to minimize the size of the range within the pink zone than to increase it in the green zone. Because of the pressure on teachers to minimize these students' failure, this is a very understandable decision. An ethical one. Anyway, it will be said, the talented students will manage very well anyway. Aren't they, in fact, far ahead from the average cohort, and even further ahead from the less competent students? That is true, I admit, but will they actualize their full potential? The answer is no, unfortunately!

And this choice of priorities very aptly describes the daily life in heterogeneous regular classrooms, not just here in Canada, but worldwide. Major evaluative studies, notably in the United States and Australia, have revealed the almost total absence in elementary classrooms of enrichment activities that specifically target talented students. The conclusion is therefore inescapable: the pressures exerted by less competent students in the pink zone leave no free time for teachers to plan and offer genuine enrichment in density. As Tom Cruise would say: "mission impossible"[7]; mission impossible! Hence the third constituent element of a true ATD: ability-based grouping.

Is this an effective solution? Yes, without hesitation, as several studies have shown. But this effectiveness depends on one important condition: the regular presence of enrichment in density. Grouping is not an end in itself, but a means to better enrichment. Ability grouping is also an efficient solution, as it allows schools to place in these groups specially trained teachers.

Now, the last point. The fourth and final characteristic targets a set of administrative modalities whose virtues I have been proclaiming since my first years in the field of talent development in the early 1980s. Think about it: how can we reconcile, on the one hand, the disparity in learning paces that the fan spread effect illustrates, and, on the other, the age/degree lockstep that the school system imposes on all its students? School acceleration offers a perfect solution to this dilemma. The various accelerative modalities smoothly ensure the continuity of enrichment in density from month to month and year to year. Indeed, once talented students have mastered

[7] "Mission impossible" em francês (N. do T.).

the current school year's curriculum, often several weeks, even months before the end of the schoolyear, what could be more logical than to begin the following year's curriculum, rather than occupying the students' free time with various types of what is called enrichment in diversity, something that is totally unrelated to the curriculum? And the sequence towards the more advanced curriculum leads very quickly, very quickly to the progression through the grades, for example, grade skipping or merged grades, merged grades.

Well, you may think that only a handful of students can benefit from an accelerated program, but it is far from true. Let me give you an example, here is a question I have asked dozens of times to groups of teachers in many, many countries. “Imagine an elementary school system with 6 grade levels. Okay, how many of the students who enter Grade 1 do you think could successfully complete this elementary curriculum in 5 years, instead of 6, without any additional effort, simply by reducing the time lost? What percentage would be your choice? 10%? 20%? 30%? More than that?” The median answer I got, year after year, was around 25%, about one student in four. In short, a quarter of the school population loses at least a year in elementary school because of the age/degree lockstep I mentioned earlier. Twenty five percent. Moreover, if that many students can save one year, how many of them could save a second year of lost time?

Unfortunately, most accelerating measures meet with strong resistance from a majority of administrators, teachers, and even some parents. They ignore or refuse to accept the overwhelming scientific evidence in favor of all forms of accelerated enrichment. Professor Borland elegantly summed this conundrum up when he asserted read closely: “Acceleration is one of the strangest phenomena in the field of education. I can think of no other issue in which there is such a gulf, a gap between what research has revealed and what most practitioners believe. The research on acceleration is so uniformly positive, the benefits of appropriate acceleration so unequivocal, that it is difficult to see how an educator could oppose it.” Visit my website and you will find several downloadable documents on this little-known gem. Now, let me conclude this presentation with nine testamentary bequests in the form of recommendations.

Number one: aim to develop the full potential of every student. Always keep in mind that it is the fundamental mission of every educational system. Two: distinguish giftedness from talent. Remember that gifted and talented people make up, at best, only 20% of the population of gifted or talented people. Three: avoid the elitism of the top 2%. In our schools, many more young students than a meager 2% achieve excellence and demonstrate a need for faster progression than average. Four: focus on talent. The science is clear: excellence in current accomplishments is the best predictor of future success. Five: integrate all components. Between them, components D, I, and E in the model exert a greater causal influence on talent than giftedness alone.

Six: maximize the fan spread effect. The regular progression of the group and the growth of individual differences sums up the first and most important law of all learning. The expansion of the fan spread effect is the best indicator of the maximum development of each learner's potential. Seven: prioritize enrichment in density. This daily modification of the regular curriculum is the keystone of any true Academic Talent Development program, as it perfectly meets the need for faster progression felt by a majority of talented and high-achieving students. Eight: promote ability-based grouping. The homogeneous grouping of high achievers is the most effective and the most efficient administrative measure to ensure true enrichment in density. Nine: implement academic acceleration. This underrated administrative gem ensures the continuity of enrichment in density across all grade levels. “Sincero obrigado pela sua atenção”.

Tania Viana: That's great. You speak Portuguese. Professor Francoys Gagné, we spent such a good time listening to you, learning from you, from your ideas about your legacy, the DMGT.

I know you have a professional career, but I'm gonna ask you a favor. Wherever you go, remember, you have a special place in our hearts and minds in Brazil. You mean a lot to all of us. I'd like to thank you for your time. Thank you for your kindness. Thank you for everything. Once again, sir, thank you.

Françoys Gagné: Wonderful. You were very kind with your words, and I appreciate it very much. And I wish you the best of luck, if you believe in luck, in your endeavors in the next months and years. Good luck to you all, and have fun.

Tania Viana: Thank you very much, sir. Bye-bye.

Françoys Gagné: Bye-bye.