

# What factors influence French Canadian Primary School Teachers' Attitudes towards Gifted Education ?

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## Introduction

- Studies on teachers' attitudes towards gifted education have mixed results. Some studies have suggested positive or neutral attitudes while others have found negative ones<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>.
- Various factors seem to influence teachers' attitudes, including teaching experience, contacts with gifted individuals<sup>2</sup>, and training in gifted education<sup>3</sup>.
- Greater understanding of teachers' attitudes is necessary, to allow their attitudes (and eventually, their behaviours) to be appropriately influenced and supported, and to ultimately ensure that gifted students receive appropriate educational opportunities and interventions.

## Objectives

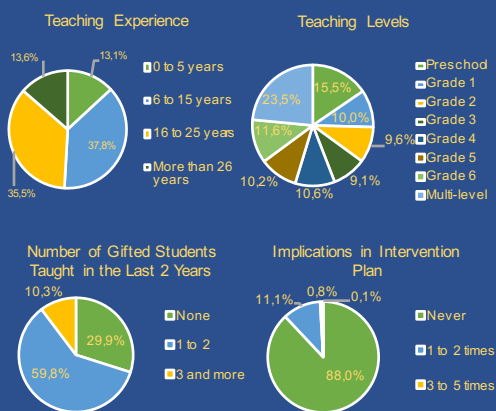
This study investigates:

- the French Canadian primary school teachers' attitudes toward gifted education and ;
- the influence of some personal characteristics (gender, teaching experience, training in giftedness, etc.) and contextual variables (teaching level, socio-economic status of the school, etc.).

## Methods

### Participants

- Recruited by Email and asked to complete online questionnaires.
- 1022 French Canadian primary school teachers (92,1 % females).
- More than 90 % of the sample received no training in gifted education in their initial educational training ( $M = 1,47$ ,  $SD = 6,90$ ).
- 88,1 % of the sample received no additional training in gifted education ( $M = 0,48$ ,  $SD = 2,02$ ).



### Questionnaires

- Sociodemographic inventory including questions about personal variables and contextual variables.
- French adaptation of:
  - Teachers' Attitude towards the Gifted and the Gifted Education<sup>1, 4</sup>: 17 items ( $\alpha = 0,806$ ) allocated in 3 subscales: Support (7 items,  $\alpha = 0,734$ ), Elitism (6 items,  $\alpha = 0,721$ ), Acceleration (4 items,  $\alpha = 0,550$ ).
  - Self-Perceptions of Giftedness<sup>1</sup> : 4 items ( $\alpha = 0,937$ ).
  - Contact with Gifted Persons<sup>2</sup> : 4 items ( $\alpha = 0,832$ ).
  - Teacher Self Efficacy<sup>1, 5</sup>: 7 items ( $\alpha = 0,821$ ).

## Results

### Attitudes toward Giftedness

- Attitudes toward gifted education are slightly positive ( $M = 4,12$ ,  $SD = 0,58$ ) (see Figure 1).
- Paired t tests were computed; all the means differ significantly from each other at the  $p < 0,001$  level.
- Attitudes are more positive for Support and less positive for Acceleration.

### Support to Gifted Education

- ANOVA revealed only **significant differences for in-service training** (see Figure 2): teachers with no training have less positive attitudes ( $F(1,1011) = 5,043$ ,  $p = 0,025$ ,  $n^2 = 0,005$ ).

### Elitism

- ANOVAs revealed **significant differences** for (see Figure 3):
  - **Gender** : female teachers have more positive attitudes toward gifted education than male teachers ( $F(1,1020) = 9,867$ ,  $p = 0,002$ ,  $n^2 = 0,010$ ).
  - **Initial training in gifted education** (see Figure 4) : teachers who have no initial training have better attitudes ( $F(1,1011) = 5,94$ ,  $p = 0,015$ ,  $n^2 = 0,006$ ).

### Acceleration

- ANOVAs revealed **significant differences** for:
  - **Teaching level** : 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher have less positive attitudes ( $F(7,1020) = 2,853$ ,  $p = 0,006$ ,  $n^2 = 0,019$ ).
  - **Type of school** (see Figure 4) : teachers working in private school have less positive attitudes ( $M = 3,21$ ,  $SD = 0,09$ ) than those working in public schools ( $M = 3,47$ ,  $SD = 0,26$ ) ( $F(1,1020) = 8,310$ ,  $p = 0,004$ ,  $n^2 = 0,008$ ).

### Non Significant Differences for All Scales According to:

- Years of experience, type of classroom, position held (regular, adaptation, specialist), socioeconomic status of the school, number of gifted students taught in the last two years, number of involvement in the development of an intervention plan for gifted students in the last 2 years.

### Personal Experience with Giftedness

- Attitudes are not related to Self-perception of giftedness, but small positive relations are observed with Self-efficacy and Contact with gifted persons (see Table 1).

Figure 1. Attitudes toward Giftedness

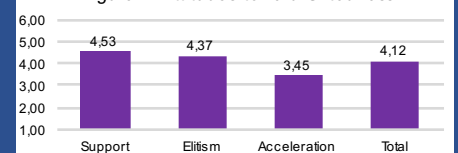


Figure 2. Differences According to In-service Training for Support



Figure 3. Differences According to Gender and Initial Training for Elitism

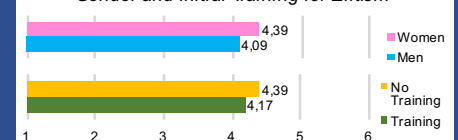


Figure 4. Differences According to Teaching Level for Acceleration

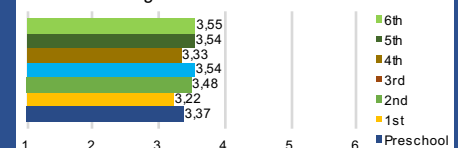


Table 1  
Relation between Attitudes and Personal Experience with Giftedness

	Self-efficacy	Self-perception	Contact with Gifted Persons
1. Support	0,07*	0,004	0,08*
2. Elitism	0,01	-0,042	0,03
3. Acceleration	0,10**	0,030	0,11***
4. Total	0,08*	-0,006	0,10***

## Discussion and Conclusions

- Attitudes towards gifted education are generally positive, except for acceleration.
  - With respect to acceleration, the results are consistent with other research conducted in Canada<sup>7</sup> or elsewhere in the world<sup>1, 2, 6</sup> where attitudes towards school acceleration were rather negative.
  - Attitudes towards acceleration are more negative for first grade teachers. It may be related to the fact that they are confronted with students admitted early to school where their opinion is often not taken into account, as this process in Quebec is at the parents' request and based on a professional evaluation.
- Of the variables studied, few variables significantly influence attitudes and effects sizes are small.
  - Other variables may further influence attitudes, such as normative beliefs or behavioral beliefs as specified by the theory of planned behavior.
- In-service training positively influences attitudes towards educational support to the needs of gifted students, although very few hours of training have been received, as observed in other studies<sup>5</sup>.
  - With almost 90% of teachers having no training in giftedness, whether in their initial training or training, the increase in training could have a beneficial effect on teachers' attitudes.
- As observed in other studies<sup>1, 2, 6</sup>, self-perception of giftedness does not influence teachers' attitudes towards gifted education, but a positive relationship is observed regarding self-efficacy and contacts with gifted individuals, particularly with respect to the responses to their educational needs.
  - As teacher self-efficacy is influenced positively by training, this reinforces the need to improve teacher training for the education of gifted students in Quebec, whether it be initial or in-service.

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