The Finnish public discussion of giftedness and gifted children

Sonja Laine*

Department of Teacher Education, Faculty of Behavioural Sciences, University of Helsinki, Finland

The purpose of this paper is to present the results of research in which the Finnish public discussion of giftedness and gifted children, and conceptions of giftedness and gifted children presented in it, were examined. The research was conducted by analyzing articles from the Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* and the teachers' periodical *Opettaja*, using the content analysis method. The results show that giftedness is seen as multidimensional, and both intrapersonal and environmental contributions are recognized as essential in talent development. The conceptions of gifted children were quite diverse, and gifted children’s possible problems were frequently discussed. Moreover, misunderstandings were revealed as well as areas that have not been adequately addressed.

**Keywords:** giftedness; gifted children; conceptions; content analysis; public discussion; advocacy

**Introduction**

The development of gifted education is a multifaceted process. One of the factors that should be taken into consideration is the surrounding culture, including its beliefs and values (Moon & Rosselli, 2000). Cultural conceptions are meaningful, as they affect who are seen as gifted and which abilities are seen as gifts (Freeman, 2005). Hence, it is worthwhile articulating the different conceptions of giftedness present in a particular culture (Taylor & Kokot, 2000). Therefore, in this research, conceptions of giftedness and gifted children found in the public discussion of the subject in Finland are examined. This is done in an effort better to understand the Finnish public discussion of giftedness and in particular to identify the main conceptions that exist.

**Everyday language versus science**

The terms “giftedness” and “gifted” are commonly used in both everyday language and in science. Nevertheless, the conceptions of these terms presented in everyday language might be significantly different from the scientific ones. In addition, the scientific conceptions differ from each other, and only a small consensus exists between scholars on what giftedness is (Moon & Rosselli, 2000). Moreover, there may be up to 100 different definitions of giftedness (Hany, 1993).

Considering the differences between the conceptions and theories, Sternberg and Zhang (1995) make a distinction between implicit theories, meaning peoples’ informal conceptions of giftedness, and explicit theories, meaning constructions,
conceptions, or theories that are based on scientific data. They claim that even though both kinds of theories are needed, the implicit theories are probably more influential in practice and in real life situations (Sternberg & Zhang, 1995). Presumably, public discussion is the place where these implicit and explicit theories, as well as science and everyday language, meet.

Conceptions and theories of giftedness can be seen as a continuum extending from the conservative to the liberal (Renzulli, 2002). The determining factor is the restrictiveness of the given definition. The conservative view is that the number of the gifted is very limited and that giftedness is only general intelligence. The liberal view is that many areas of giftedness exist, and thus giftedness is something broader (Renzulli, 2002). Even though some psychologists still equate giftedness with a high IQ, the multifaceted approaches are more consistent in current theory and research (Renzulli, 2002). Today, giftedness is mostly seen as broad and complex, and as something other than only high intelligence.

The public discussion of giftedness and gifted children

In the public discussion, different expectations concerning school meet. Participants in these discussions try to influence one another, as well as the actualization of education (Ahonen, 2008). Moreover, during such discussions, different views and conceptions are shared.

The public discussion can be considered from the perspective of the media. It has been claimed that the media sometimes give an incorrect picture of the gifted. Media might portray the gifted as geniuses, oddities and nerds (Meckstroth & Kearney, 2007), and furthermore, give negative impressions of the gifted (Radford, 1998). In addition, the media can be replete with stereotypes, sensationalism, or inaccurateness (Webb, Gore, Amend, & DeVries, 2007). At its best, the print media is the place for advocacy. Advocacy can be defined as an “effort to educate legislators, administrators, teachers and the general public about appropriate education for able pupils” (Rosenstein & Dettmer, 1991, p. 179) or as “an act of speaking or writing in favor of an issue by providing public recommendation and support” (Karnes & Lewis, 1997). Advocacy is deemed important in the development of gifted education. It is needed especially when prevailing attitudes are in opposition to special education for the gifted and talented (Moon & Rosselli, 2000). Clear information can dispel myths, and understating and support may increase as a result (Renzulli & Reis, 1991).

Furthermore, articles published in the print media have the power to influence the views of many people, especially those who do not receive other forms of information (Lewis & Karnes, 1997). The questions of whether and how the media eventually affects people’s knowledge, attitudes, or behavior has long been central in media effect research (Shrum, 2002). In this research, it is seen that print media can influence people’s conceptions, knowledge, and attitudes. It is also assumed that without proper knowledge and understanding, support for gifted education will remain limited (Lewis & Karnes, 1997).

Despite the importance of advocacy and proper general knowledge, there is an evident lack of research in which the discussion and conceptions of giftedness in the print media is qualitatively analyzed. Previous research and articles have largely focused on media coverage of the gifted (Karnes & Lewis, 1997; Lewis & Karnes, 1997) and advocacy of gifted education (e.g., Renzulli & Reis, 1991). Radford
High Ability Studies 65

(1998) directly dealt with the print media, examining prodigies’ depiction in the press. However, the questions of what is discussed, and what conceptions of giftedness and gifted children are presented in the public discussion, have not been researched.

The aim of the study

The aim of this study is to analyze qualitatively the Finnish public discussion of giftedness and gifted children. The research questions are as follows:

1. What is being discussed about giftedness and gifted children in the public discussion?
2. What are the main conceptions of giftedness and gifted children in the discussion?
3. Is there a lack of information or are there misunderstandings in the discussion?

The rationale for the study is threefold. First, those who develop gifted education need to know the main conceptions that are present in this particular culture. These conceptions must be considered when the development process is planned. Second, as publicly shared knowledge and understanding is central, it is important to know what is presented in the discussion. This research provides an opportunity to evaluate the information and examine whether a lack of information or misunderstandings exists. Third, there is an evident lack of research on this subject.

Method

Data source descriptions

As is known, the development of gifted education is a multifaceted process, and is both a societal and an educational matter. To cover both of these aspects, articles were looked at from two important Finnish publications: the periodical Opettaja and the newspaper Helsingin Sanomat. Together they provide good insight into the Finnish discussion of giftedness and gifted children.

Opettaja (“Teacher” in English) is aimed at teachers, and is the oldest Finnish weekly periodical (published 40 times per year). Teachers from early childhood education to adult education are its principal readers. It is estimated that as many as 173,000 people read Opettaja (Opettaja, 2008). Opettaja is the primary source of educational discussion, and most of its writers and readers are either educators or professionals in education.

The second source of data is Helsingin Sanomat (HS), the largest daily newspaper in Finland. As many as three-fourths of Helsinki metropolitan area residents and a quarter of all Finns read HS. Daily circulation during the week is approximately 440,000 and on Sundays 500,000 (Helsingin Sanomat, 2008). HS is the main arena of societal discussion in Finland.

Data collection

Articles were searched for from the publications’ electronic archives (www.opettaja.fi, www.hs.fi). All articles included in the analysis were published between 1992 and
2007. This timeline was chosen so that the data would contain as many years before as after 2000, and so that the articles would be available in electronic archives.

The search term was the Finnish word *lahjak*, which means both giftedness and talent. Thus the search included variations of the terms giftedness, talent, gifted, and talented. Since *HS* is a large newspaper, the search was limited to the domestic, editorial, and opinion sections. Because of the scope of the study, the words “intelligence”, “creativity”, or accompanying terms such as “ability” or “high ability” were not searched for independently, but were taken into account if they co-occurred with the search term.

Choosing the final articles to be included in the study was based on the following three criteria:

1. Giftedness was the primary subject of the article.
2. Giftedness was a collateral subject of the article either generally or it related to the education of the gifted.
3. Some statement about giftedness was made and the article was connected to the field of gifted education at the comprehensive school level or to the general policies of gifted education.

For example, an article was not included if it dealt with universities or if the word was used only to refer to a known talented person.

**Sample descriptions**

The search word was found in 488 and 1098 articles in *Opettaja* and *HS*, respectively. All articles were reviewed applying the three criteria, of which 138 from *Opettaja* and 193 from *HS* (67% opinion, 24% domestic, and 9% editorial) were included. The basic variables of the sample are shown in Table 1.

Each year at least some articles discussed giftedness. The data showed that in *HS* the amount of discussion was more varied (SD=8,021): there were years when the discussion of giftedness was extensive and years when it was scarce. The data showed that the amount of discussion was more even in *Opettaja* (SD=3,052).

All of the chosen articles were divided into three categories based on how they dealt with giftedness. Table 2 shows these categories.

Most of the articles were those in which some kind of statement about giftedness was made. In *Opettaja*, the number of these articles was particularly high, but the percentage of articles where giftedness was the primary or collateral subject was quite low. In both publications, slightly more articles were published 2000–2007 than in 1992–1999. No significant differences between the year groups were found.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum number of articles per year</th>
<th>Maximum number of articles per year</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articles in <em>Opettaja</em></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>8.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles in <em>Helsingin Sanomat</em></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>12.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data was analyzed using content analysis. The analysis was mainly qualitative although some basic quantitative analysis was also conducted. Content analysis can be seen as a method for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (Krippendorf, 2004). The analysis phase starts with selecting the unit of analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Krippendorf, 2004; Weber, 1990). In this study, a sentence was selected to be the unit of analysis. The analysis was done in an inductive-oriented manner, as the categories were derived from the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The purpose was not to test theory, but rather to reveal the main discussed categories and conceptions. The phases of the analysis will now be described.

First, units (original sentences) were reduced to simplified statements, and long sentences were split into multiple simplified statements (Example 1):

Example 1. “It requires belief in oneself, a lot of work, enthusiasm, support, and good teachers to develop talent.”
→Development requires belief in oneself.
→Development requires work.
→Etc.

Second, the simplified statements were clustered into subcategories. Third, using reduction and abstraction, the main categories were formed. Figure 1 shows an example of how the reduction and abstraction were used.

Results
Discussion and conceptions of giftedness
In *Opettaja*, 206 simplified statements (from 54 articles) and in *Helsingin Sanomat* 356 simplified statements (from 88 articles) of giftedness were found. The main categories and the three biggest higher categories can be seen in Table 3.

(1) Defining giftedness
First, *Domains of giftedness* were discussed. All the domains of Gardner’s (1999) theory of Multiple Intelligences were mentioned, and some of the areas were
discussed more than others. For example, natural and existential intelligences were mentioned only once. Social and emotional giftedness were discussed in HS but almost not at all in Opettaja. It seems that giftedness is generally seen as multidimensional, but still some areas are discussed more than others.

Second, the Prevalence of giftedness was discussed. In this category, the questions were mostly about how many children can be gifted or are all children gifted:

Based on some researchers, only two to three percent of children need special education because of their abilities (HS, February 23, 1992)

and

Not all children are good in math or sports, but everyone has some talents and skills, which one can and should develop (Opettaja, June 13, 2003).

Most often, it was stated that the number of the gifted is limited. The presented percentages of estimated gifted varied from 1% to 20%. The opposite opinion, “every child is gifted”, was also present. In Opettaja, close to 30% and in HS close to 15% of statements in this higher category claimed that all are gifted. Both publications reflected the view that children with learning disabilities or behavioral disorder can also be gifted. However, this view was not common, having been found only a few times in the data.

Third, the challenges of defining giftedness were discussed. It was stated that many kinds of giftedness exist, the definitions of which were seen to be connected to time, society, and culture:
Giftedness depends also on culture and the spirit of time, and its content varies over time (Opettaja, November 22, 2006).

(2) Learning and development process

The learning and development process was extensively discussed. At a general level, it was stated that giftedness in childhood does not guarantee success in adulthood. It was seen that giftedness alone is not enough. Two main contributions affecting the development of giftedness were found: environmental contributions and individual contributions.

First, the environmental contributions were discussed. In HS, the discussion concentrated on the milieu, and articles were mostly of the opinion that social, cultural, and emotional factors in the environment affect development. In Opettaja, it was usual to discuss individuals; its pieces were of the opinion that the support and encouragement of parents, teachers, and other significant persons is very important for talent development. The difference between the two publications can be explained by the audiences they are targeted to: the general public (HS) and teachers/educators (Opettaja).

Second, individual contributions were discussed. It was primarily stated that development requires motivation and a great deal of work:

Everyone has to do lots of work to develop into a talented adult of any domain of giftedness (Opettaja, April 7, 2000).

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main category+higher category</th>
<th>Number of statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opettaja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining giftedness</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Domains of giftedness</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Prevalence of giftedness</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Challenges of defining giftedness</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Other discussed areas</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and development process</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Environmental contributions</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Individual contributions</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Heredity</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Other discussed areas</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Appearance of intelligence</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Intelligence tests</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Intelligence as a separating concept</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Other discussed areas</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Appearance of creativity</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Factors that affect creativity</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Other discussed areas</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Certain individual contributions such as personal characteristics or endurance were also mentioned. In addition, heredity was discussed, but was only mentioned a few times.

(3) Intelligence
In the chosen articles, intelligence was also discussed. This occurred more frequently in HS than in Opettaja. First, there were discussions about appearance of intelligence, where definitions of intelligence varied significantly. At one end of the spectrum, there were statements about intelligence as deductive ability, mental characteristics, good memory, and problem-solving ability. At the other end were statements about intelligence as goodness, humor, consideration for others, and good behavior. Hence, the concept of intelligence was used both traditionally as a mental characteristic and more broadly when other personal characteristics such as social behavior were included in the concept.

Second, intelligence tests were discussed. This discussion dealt with the problems of measuring intelligence with tests, the effects of culture on the results and the inadequacy of tests that do not reveal the complete reality of one’s intelligence. Intelligence tests were viewed quite negatively, as the next example shows:

Intelligence tests measure only and exclusively success in those tests, not intelligence (HS, June 4, 2006).

Third, intelligence as a separating concept was discussed. It was stated that intelligence separates people into groups: good, average, and poor. There was also some discussion about differences between the sexes.

(4) Creativity
In addition, creativity was discussed alongside with giftedness. Here, two areas were most often discussed. First was the appearance of creativity. Creativity was viewed as courage, risk taking, originality, and innovativeness. Openness, curiosity, and sensitivity to details were also mentioned. Second was factors that affect creativity. It was stated that many factors affect creativity and that creativity can be either stifled or nourished. Creativity needs an individual’s motivation and it requires time, freedom, and stimuli, as demonstrated by this example:

A creative person can develop if the environment encourages and gives stimuli and courage to find one’s own path to self-actualization (HS, June 1, 2002).

Discussion and conceptions of gifted children
Considering gifted children, 174 simplified statements were found in Opettaja (from 36 articles) and 196 in HS (from 69 articles). Seven main categories were formed from these, as described below (Table 4).

(1) Gifted children’s problems in and out of school
A significant amount of discussion noted that gifted children were frustrated, underachieving, unadaptable, and hostile towards school:
Some get depressed or create a disturbance. Some swallow their frustration and let their gifts wither (Opettaja, May 18, 2007).

Frustrated or underachieving students were most often seen as creating disturbances, acting foolishly, behaving badly and being impatient, impassive, and aggressive.

(2) Gifted children’s motivation and willpower

Intrapersonal characteristics such as motivation and willpower were also discussed. It was said that gifted children are highly motivated and interested, and that they also have a thirst for knowledge:

They learn fast and are highly motivated and interested in many things (Opettaja, January 29, 1999).

Furthermore, gifted children were seen as hardworking and perseverant, and as having the will to accomplish tasks.

(3) Gifted children’s need for support

On the one hand, the gifted were seen to be so strong that they could succeed on their own. Among other things, it was felt that they are strong mentally and they manage well in their lives. On the other hand, it was stated that gifted children need support. The profile of the gifted can be also uneven. For example, a child might be gifted in mathematics but need more support in social skills.

(4) Gifted children’s learning and expertise

Gifted children’s learning was seen to be rapid and facile. They were perceived as happy to learn and to understand, and to be of a questioning nature. In Opettaja good ability to concentrate, eagerness to ask questions, and appreciation of learning, and in HS ability to work independently, good thinking skills, and ability to brainstorm were mentioned.
Gifted children’s problems in their social life

The gifted child was often perceived as being apart from others, lonely, and sometimes even harassed:

Too often highly gifted persons have problems, for example in everyday issues or with social situations (HS, May 10, 2004).

Only a few comments were of the view that the gifted child gets along with others or has good social skills.

Gifted children’s success in school

Some statements pointed out that the school success of the gifted is mostly good. In addition, the gifted were also seen to be model students and well adapted. In Opettaja, gifted children were also presented as perfectionists and as challenging students. In HS, there was some mention of gifted children not always succeeding in school and not always being model students.

Characteristics of creatively gifted children

The terms most used to describe creative children were self-contained, idea-rich, energetic, and risk taking. Intuition, aggressiveness, absentmindedness, and enjoyment of nature were also mentioned.

Misunderstandings and areas that were not adequately adhered to

Three misunderstandings were identified. First is the view that “every child is gifted”. Winner (1996) has labeled this a myth and stated that although every child has strengths, some children have exceptional strengths in one or more areas. Moreover, this myth can be harmful, because it might lead to a denial of the special needs of the gifted (Winner, 1996). It must be stressed, however, that not all children are equally gifted, and that all children have their own strengths and weaknesses. All children are also equally important and valuable. These should not be confused.

Second is the view that “gifted children can succeed on their own”. This conception completely ignores gifted children’s needs and can generally be very harmful to the gifted. It can also be used as one of the arguments against gifted education (Colangelo & Davis, 2003). Under this category, the idea that gifted children will automatically succeed in adulthood was also discussed. Winner (1996) considers this, too, to be a myth, arguing that the link between giftedness and adulthood success is not direct. Furthermore, there are many intervening factors. As Gagné (2004) has described in his Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT), both intrapersonal and environmental factors affect the development process. These factors were discussed extensively.

Third, gifted children were perceived as having problems in their social life. This cannot be viewed directly as a misunderstanding and some caution here is needed. In general, there tends to be two ways to view the social aspects of the gifted: (1) they are not popular or well accepted by their peers or (2) they are at least as well adjusted as their peers (Norman, Ramsay, Roberts, & Martray, 2000; Winner, 1996). Both of these aspects have been supported by research (Norman et al., 2000). Therefore, it
must be remembered that there are also gifted children who are at least as well adjusted as their peers.

There were also areas that were not adequately addressed and where more discussion is needed. First, more discussion about the different areas of giftedness, and especially how giftedness appears in these areas, would be beneficial. It is not enough only to mention the different areas. There were also areas of giftedness that were not discussed, and it could be claimed that some of the areas of giftedness seem to be more respected. More discussion is needed, for example, on social and natural giftedness.

Second, students with both giftedness and disabilities or behavioral problems were not greatly discussed, as only a few statements considered the subject. Many researchers have stated that gifted children can also belong to some other specific group (e.g., Reis & Renzulli, 2004; Reis & McCoach, 2002; Yewchuk & Lupart, 2000). More discussion that considers this is needed.

Third, only a minimal amount of the discussion dealt with giftedness in economically disadvantaged students. None of it dealt with giftedness in minority students. In the USA, to mention one country, it has often been noted that certain groups of children are continuously underrepresented in programs for the gifted (e.g., Borland & Wright, 2000; Callahan, 2005; Gordon & Bridgalall, 2005). Even though we do not have a separate system for the gifted in Finland, this must be taken into consideration. Educators should be aware of this, otherwise there is a danger that giftedness in these children will not be identified and supported.

Discussion

This paper investigated the Finnish public discussion of giftedness and gifted children, and the conceptions of giftedness and gifted children presented in that discussion. Altogether, the conceptions found showed that in the discussion giftedness is seen mainly as multidimensional: giftedness can occur in different areas. No strict conceptions were found, but rather many different ways to view giftedness. In other words, the conceptions were more liberally oriented than conservatively oriented.

It also became clear that it is more common to discuss the domains of giftedness, how many children can be gifted, or the challenges of defining giftedness, than it is to try to determine what giftedness actually is. Giftedness is not seen as something only inherited, natural, or given: the learning and development process was also regarded as important. It was perceived that to develop his or her gifts, a child needs to be motivated, work hard, and receive support from the environment.

Gifted children were described and discussed from varying viewpoints. On the one hand, some statements considered gifted children’s possible problems both in and out of school as well as in social life. On the other hand, the gifted were seen as highly motivated and interested, in addition to being hard working. Their learning was seen to be rapid and facile. It could be claimed that gifted children were seen quite heterogeneously.

This diversity of conceptions raises the question of how gifted children are really identified and taken into account in schools and classrooms. Because of the different conceptions, we might not even be discussing the same thing when we consider the need for the development of gifted education. Thus, those who participate in the discussion should define what they mean by giftedness. Diversity of conceptions is, however, not necessarily a negative factor. It is good that in Finland giftedness is seen broadly and in a more liberal manner. This offers an opportunity to develop gifted
education in a direction where different types of giftedness and gifted children are taken into account.

The impression of the media holding incorrect views of the gifted was not supported by this research, as only two clear misunderstandings were found: that all children are gifted and that the gifted can succeed on their own. These misunderstandings must be corrected by providing more information to the public.

Considering the results from the perspective of advocacy and sharing information, it was suggested that at least three subjects require more discussion: the areas of giftedness, the giftedness in minority and economically disadvantaged students, and gifted students with learning disabilities or behavioral problems. More discussion about these subjects might also increase support for gifted education. It would also clarify the idea of gifted education, and especially the fact that the purpose of gifted education is not take care of an elite.

In the development of gifted education in Finland, the conceptions of giftedness and gifted children identified here should be taken into account. In particularly, the mentioned misunderstandings and lack of information must be considered, for example when the education of teachers is planned. Additionally, how public discussion can be used in the development of gifted education should be examined. To date, few Finnish researchers in the field have written and shared their knowledge in the public discussion. And as Lewis and Karnes (1997) have stated, if each researcher published one article per year, the general public’s understanding would be broadened. From this point of a view, the current discussion in Finland is insufficient in volume. Hence, researchers and educators interested in giftedness and gifted education should be more active in publishing articles, for example.

**Trustworthiness and limitations**

To increase the trustworthiness of the present research, its methods and analysis process have been described in as much detail as possible. The publications from which the articles were retrieved were also described. A demonstration of the analysis process has been given for the purpose of assisting the reader. In addition, categories and their sizes as well as examples of original statements were presented so that the reader might see which were the most discussed areas and which conceptions were placed into these categories.

The study was limited by the use of secondary data (Johnson & Turner, 2003). First, the data may be incomplete, because of the selective reporting and recording (Johnson & Turner, 2003): Here, electronic archives were used. It can be claimed that the data gathering method used here was quite reliable because the same search results may be attained if the same search terms are used. Some differences can occur because of the subjectivity inherent in the researcher’s final selection of articles. The final selection criteria could also have been chosen differently. The criteria used in this research were selected in keeping with the main interest of the researcher being compulsory education and gifted children. A degree of selection was also required, as the number of articles in which the search term existed was very large.

Second, official documents, for example articles in newspapers, might not apply to general populations (Johnson & Turner, 2003). It must be remembered that this study informs about the public discussion and the conceptions presented in it. It does not offer much information about the wider conceptions present in Finland and can thus be generalized only with caution. It must also be remembered that the sampled
writers were at least somehow selective in that they were all interested in gifted education. Therefore, the present research provides only limited information about the Finnish public’s conceptions of giftedness, and generalizations considering about these should not be made.

**Acknowledgements**

Special thanks go to the Emil Aaltonen Foundation for providing the financial support for this research.

**References**


