

# **The Case *for* A Gifted Education Approach in the Romanian Educational System: Breaking New Grounds in An Adventist School**

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## **Abstract**

This article examines the framework for gifted education, exploring significant directions and theories, and addressing the problem of the absence of a sustainable gifted education program in Romania. Its goal is to raise awareness about the necessary systemic changes and to propose a tentative program for a Romanian Adventist school. The theories supporting this study revolve around intelligence and its complementary concepts, sociocultural contexts, and staff development, as well as the systemic shift from giftedness to gifted education. The article also lays the groundwork for a larger research project on the gifted education framework within this school, as it presents an ongoing study in its early stage, utilizing action research to pioneer efforts in a relatively unexplored area by Romanian schools. Data will be collected in the aftermath through interviews, observations, and document analysis, with teachers from the school being participants in the study. Insights gained from this research could help further studies and initiatives on gifted education at both the school-wide and national levels in Romania.

## **Keywords**

Gifted education, Romanian educational system, Adventist elementary school.

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## INTRODUCTION

Giftedness has been studied over the recent years in fields like neuroscience - enhancing the instruments of effective learning and brain training (Meier, 2000), psychology (Borland, 2003; Pfeiffer, 2008), and in educational programs for students with special needs, talented or gifted (Leavitt, 2017). The category of talented and gifted students is the focus of this study.

The last decades' trends are shifting the research and practice from giftedness to gifted education (Plucker et al., 2017). Nevertheless, we must keep in mind that effective teaching in gifted education is recommended to have a whole school approach (Robinson & Campbell, 2010), and this is a real challenge for the educational domain. Even though the USA (the leading force in giftedness studies) has championed academic programs and curricula for this category of students in the last decades (Assouline et al., 2015), there is still an area of study in which, worldwide, initiatives on how to deal with giftedness are yet to be understood and implemented.

The case of Romania's lack of a sustainable gifted education program has made this research initiative become a useful instrument to better understand not only the cognitive and socio-emotional elements of giftedness but also the pragmatic and constructivist approach to gifted education. The novelty of our initiative, introduced here and developed in an extensive study later relies on presenting a thorough approach to gifted education adapted to the Romanian system of education, being the first of its kind. The action research and data analysis will enhance the understanding of new possibilities to tackle the local gifted education problem.

The theories that support the study comprise a threefold perspective: first, the revised approach to intelligence and giftedness in the last decades, including complementary concepts of giftedness such as talent, multiple intelligence, creativity,

interest, wisdom, high ability, and behavioral characteristics; second, the sociocultural theories and third, the professional development, aiming at a school-wide approach.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Joyner et al. (2013) traced the foundations and the ground-work needed for research, stressing aspects such as understanding the special nature of the dissertation, institutional requirements, and how to find the research problem or to conduct a focused review of the literature, among others. Their contribution has helped me significantly with the organization of the literature.

According to some theorists, researchers of giftedness fall into two categories (Ahmad, 2013, p. 1342): (1) “domain-general researchers” who ask the question “What is giftedness?”, and (2) “domain-specific researchers” who base their inquiries on intelligence theories and the multidimensional factors that shape giftedness. In these two categories, talent seems to be the dynamic component that helps developmental theories of giftedness shift from static traits to the dynamic process of talent development. The definitions of giftedness and talent were somewhat synonymous, reaching a point where talent was perceived as a special aptitude, while genius was seen as “a high, exceptional, and inborn ability” (Ahmad, 2013, p. 1338). Giftedness, talent, expertise, and creative achievement were often discussed together. On the other hand, giftedness was perceived as a more complex process, a “system” implying psychological processes, commitment to tasks, extraordinary ability, creativity or, as the Sternberg’s WICS Model states, a synthesis of creativity (practical skills), intelligence (analytical skills), and wisdom skills. Added to these were genetics, environment, productivity, and developmental aspects, among others.

Before the 1970s, assessments of gifted students were *on a large case-by-case basis* and mostly based on evaluating cognitive ability. Starting with Stanley's 1972 study, intellectual giftedness shifted from studies on individuals to studies on groups. From this time on, intelligence was perceived not only by IQ level but also by other components such as problem-solving, analytical, and verbal skills, practical knowledge, and creativity, among others. These new inputs on human capabilities were accompanied by curriculum and instruction programs for gifted students/adults. The purpose was to nurture and enhance human capabilities as well as discover them. Furthermore, it became common knowledge that investing in gifted students meant investing in future leaders and innovators of society. Since the 1980s, Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers predicted that staff development would become a human resource development system designed to change the nature of education, the status of school personnel, and the relationship between the two. It is no surprise that Asian initiatives, such as curriculum projections, have recently confirmed that innovation in giftedness comes firsthand from a specific curriculum and teacher training. Close to this research, studies show that giftedness has its own paradigms and paradoxes (Pfeiffer, 2008, 2018).

In the early 1980s, Francoys Gagné stated the ambiguity between giftedness and talent in scientific literature and proposed a distinct definition for the two notions. Giftedness “corresponds to competence, which is distinctly above average in one or more domains of ability” while talent “refers to performance, which is distinctly above average in one or more fields of human performance” (Gagné, 1985, p. 108). Gagné came up with a differentiated model of giftedness and talent, which suggested four major domains of human abilities: intellectual, creative, socio-affective, and sensorimotor.

Ziegler and Phillipson are trying to converge on a systemic definition of giftedness. Starting from renowned theories of

giftedness, such as the multifactorial model, which includes giftedness in the narrow sense, non-cognitive internal factors, and external factors (Ziegler & Phillipson, 2012, p. 4), they point to the lack of practice of initial gifted education theories. The “mechanistic research paradigm,” or the ineffective traditional paradigm of giftedness that lasted for about a century, should be replaced, say the authors, by a “systemic perspective,” considered as an antithesis to analytical thinking, in which “systems theory offers an alternate perspective on the relationship between components and the whole” (Ziegler & Phillipson, 2012, p. 10). Opposed to the “mechanistic approach” of WICS theory is systems theory, which assumes that “the same outcome can be achieved from various starting points and can take various trajectories” (Ziegler & Phillipson, 2012, p. 12). The authors include concepts such as context dependency, interdependency, interconnectedness, and various system levels that are crucial for the development of excellence. For this, the *actiotope model* is given as an example of a systemic concept of giftedness, in which there is a synergy between various scientific disciplines. The actiotope model implies four components: the action repertoire, goals, the environment, and the subjective action space (Ziegler & Phillipson, 2012, p. 17). Thus, the systemic approach relies mostly on dynamic components, on the interactions between the gifted person and the environment, and a *dynamic-interactive regulation* instead of *gifted education*.

Owen and Porath observe the paradigm shift in the field of education and giftedness towards its own pedagogy. The three broad stages the authors identify are “demystification, identification, and transaction” (Owen & Porath, 2017, p. 344). The demystification was accompanied by scientific methods that “unpacked” human intelligence, followed by psychometric studies on individual differences, which paved the way for formal gifted education. Nowadays, giftedness is seen as “dynamic, contextual, and emergent” (Owen & Porath, 2017, p.

348), congruent with studies in developmental psychology and epistemological constructivism. In this view, we see a broadened notion of giftedness, which includes IQ, complexity, potentiality, and diversity. The third paradigm, the *transaction paradigm*, is a consequence of programs and services for the gifted, in order to enrich potential.

Giftedness, as studied in the fields of education, neuroscience, and psychology, should be regarded in the second decade of the 21st century with new lenses and with deep roots in leadership, according to Sternberg (2020, p. 230). He introduces the term *transformational giftedness*, understood as the force to change the world positively, while *transactional giftedness* is defined as an expectation for the gifted individual to give back, in a system of rewards or even punishments. Sternberg argues that society perceives gifted students mainly in a transactional way - they should excel academically or succeed later in life, in terms of accomplishments and measurable gains. Transformational giftedness appears as a holistic approach, rather than an objectified transactional giftedness. Moreover, argues Sternberg, achieving the common good is a trait of transformational giftedness, while achieving personal good is a trait of transactional giftedness, in behavior analysis.

Overall, some of the issues that have arisen recently with the increasing awareness of giftedness are: (a) diagnosis or misdiagnosis of gifted and talented students (Webb et al., 2005, 2012); (b) giftedness means more than intelligence (Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004; Sternberg & Kaufman, 2011); (c) the context of learning (Renzulli, 1978); (d) intersecting concepts such as creativity, talent, and giftedness (Heller et al., 2000; Horowitz et al., 2009; Hymer et al., 2009; Shavinina, 2009; Sriraman & Lee, 2011); (e) methodologies—predominantly quantitative (Karnes & Bean, 2009; Thompson & Subotnik, 2010); (f) teacher training (Smith, 2005); (g) curriculum; (h) emotional, social, and psychological implications of giftedness (Miller, 1997; Neihart et al., 2016).

## Theoretical framework

In the last decades, a couple of models and theories emerged from the research on giftedness and gifted education. A selection relevant to the study is as follows:

1. **Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences:** In his book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1983), Howard Gardner stated the theory that intelligence is not a single entity and that there are several types of intelligence. In his definition, "intelligence is the ability to solve problems, or to create products, that are valued within one or more cultural settings" (Gardner, 1983, p. 28). Gardner's multiple intelligences include linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic types of intelligence.
2. **Renzulli's seminal work on gifted education**, which includes the enrichment triad model, the schoolwide enrichment model, talent, creativity, and interest development, scales for rating the behavioral characteristics of the students, systems, and models for creating designated programs in gifted education, the three rings concept on giftedness etc. (Reis & Renzulli, 2014; Reis et al., 2004; Renzulli et al., 2021; Renzulli, 1986, 1997; Renzulli & Reis, 2004, 2021; Renzulli, Gentry et al., 2021).
3. **The Pygmalion effect in the classroom** (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968) explores the idea of how the teachers' expectations influence student behavior and performance.
4. **Sociocultural theories** related to the field of education and specifically to gifted education (McGlonn-Nelson, 2005), exploring Vygotsky's theory, the effects of the traditional identification process in gifted education and teacher preparation to implement Vygotsky's ZDP (Zone of Proximal Development) notion in the field of education.

5. **Student achievement through staff development** (Joyce & Showers, 2002) creates useful connections between the structure of the staff, including designs for training, peer coaching, and moving from workshops to the classroom (student learning as a goal).
6. **Sternberg's WICS model** (2003) discusses the relations between wisdom, intelligence and creativity are intertwined.

These six theory models will serve as catalysts in understanding the relationships between giftedness and its complementary concepts, and strategies for staff development. The study is linked to these theories and models as they present key facets when discussing gifted education. On one hand, understanding giftedness and its complementary concepts and emphasizing the dynamics of intelligence studies in the last decades provided a new emphasis on complementary issues regarding giftedness. On the other hand, there was a need to shift towards a gifted education framework, that implied understanding sociocultural aspects, qualitative implications in the diagnosis of giftedness, teacher training, and a systemic approach to this specific phenomenon of special needs education.

### **The Romanian educational system and the gifted education problem**

The first European initiative on gifted education took place in 1986. Following this initiative, the European Council for High Ability was established. Subsequently, UNESCO and the OECD have led several initiatives on educational trends, such as sustainable development, neuroscience studies on learning, and pedagogical approaches to *adaptive learning* (OECD, 2018).

The legislative framework for giftedness was regulated in Romania in 2007 by the first law which established the rights of gifted and talented students (Law 17/2007). Beforehand,

creating a context for the law, EDUGATE (Romanian Consortium for the Education of Gifted and Talented Children and Youth, established in 2006) was the initiative of the first center for gifted education in Romania and a member of UNESCO, WCGTC, ECHA. This was a blended approach to the giftedness of the American framework, adapted to the European one.

In 2009, the Ministry of Education was more intentional in some aspects of teacher training and education of high-achieving children (Law 189 26/05/2009). The year 2019 brought a new law for the Romanian educational landscape, which stated that in every county in Romania, a Center for Excellence should be opened. Two years later, in 2011, the National Education Act stated in OMECTS 5489 that students capable of exceptional academic performance could skip one year per learning cycle. This article applies to each of the three levels of study: primary, secondary, and high school. The year 2019 brought a new law for the Romanian educational landscape, which stated that in every county in Romania, a Center for Excellence should be opened.

Despite numerous efforts to enhance gifted educational outcomes in the USA, many international systems of education still struggle to understand, diagnose, and create systemic programs for gifted education. Likewise, the Romanian system of education provides basic legislation, but there is a lack of implementation and a lack of designated programs, as well as staff development.

Current legislation adheres to European regulations and is influenced by the American framework for gifted education but fails to lead in student and teacher gains. On a larger scale, the OECD Learning Framework 2030 encompasses several directions that could directly influence the state of Romanian education since Romania is a part of the European Union and abides by its guidelines: solutions for a rapidly changing world, individual and collective well-being, skills,

competencies, attitudes, and values in action (OECD, 2018). Even though they do not specifically name the need to better understand the condition of exceptional children, these guidelines could help understand the main directions that European and Romanian education heads towards.

However, even though the 2030 European Framework includes four schooling scenarios provided by the OECD and refers to innovative pedagogies (OECD, 2018), none of the scenarios present a framework for gifted education and staff development that could be replicated in Romania, which usually is influenced by OECD tendencies. Furthermore, the Romanian Ministry of Education has not provided sustainable training for teachers, operational strategies for schools, or a specific curriculum on gifted education. In the recent years, only one program from the several hundred dedicated to staff development and covered by national funds is dedicated to training teachers in working with gifted students.

Few academic studies speak about the category of talented and gifted students and mostly emphasize the failure of educational reforms (Miroiu, 1998). Moreover, there is no coherent or nationwide program to be implemented, besides the activity of the Romanian Centre for Gifted Education, which targets individual gifted students.

To date, the Romanian education system has accumulated some laws and theories, but there are only a few initiatives that deal with these left-behind students, all coming from the private sector, NGOs, or parents. The general population of students is perceived as being at the Critical Level 2 according to PISA 2023 measurements, considering math, reading, and literacy (PISA, 2022). This means that the average student does not have a performant educational system, while the gifted student is invisible – no official testing, some laws that lack implementation, and no sustainable public policies to nurture high ability.

## METHODOLOGY

Given the situation of the Romanian educational system concerning giftedness and staff development, the study aims to:

1. Understand the gifted education approach taking place in an elementary school in Romania.
2. Train elementary school teachers on how to use the gifted education approach for gifted students.
3. Implement the initial action plan in an elementary school in Romania.
4. Understand the perception of the teachers after the implementation of the action plan.
5. Improve the initial action plan based on the findings of this study.
6. Finally, enhance the author's skills as a principal, trainer, and researcher.

This study will be useful for teachers who will be trained, as they will become knowledgeable about the gifted education framework. It will help talented and gifted students by providing them with classes tailored to their needs. It will benefit administrators and parents as well, due to the possibility of increased enrollment and satisfaction. Finally, the study will add to the body of knowledge in education. For the researcher, this study will help improve her knowledge, skills, and disposition regarding gifted education.

The author of the study—who is both a researcher and the principal of the school in which the action research will take place—chose to use a practical action research type of inquiry, as it best includes dynamic factors that would put an emphasis on several aspects regarding gifted education and thus observing better the phenomenon. This is because the goal is to describe, understand, and discover the perceptions about the giftedness framework—what is done in the school, and what should be done, on the perception level. The action research

will benefit the participants involved in the study, that is the teachers, and it will provide input for the school, as nation, and school-wide practical programs are expected. Moreover, it will enable the participants, the researcher, and the school to interpret the reality regarding gifted education in the school.

## **Research paradigm**

The term *paradigm* was defined as “the set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed” (Kuhn, 1962, 1992, p. 10). The research paradigm for this study has a three-fold dimension—paradigmatic, social constructivist and my own philosophy of education. The socio-constructivism paradigm is associated with qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) and a paradigm for action research, as well. According to Bada (2015), social constructivism implies the belief that people search life meanings in their proximal environment. The researcher is building an understanding through personal lenses and observations, as well as other people’s beliefs, combined with upbringing, life events or education (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). That is why a researcher will have the task of interpreting the participants’ points of view, considering their worldviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Thus, this study will help the participants reflect on the old ways of seeing giftedness. This would help them change their ways of thinking and improve the micro-society of education they are in. In this respect, the researcher will try to discover what objective and subjective condition could help bringing in new alternatives on giftedness. It is a participative process, with self-reflection and commitment to improve the micro-societal conditions of talented and gifted students.

Another paradigm for this study is the pragmatic approach, anchored in the present experiences. The pragmatists use every method possible that works to answer their research questions

(Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). Along with the social-constructivist paradigm and the pragmatic one, the researcher's philosophy of education will contribute to the shaping of this study. It is a holistic approach influenced by Ellen White in her books *Education* (2009) and *Fundamental Principles of Christian Education* (1997), and also by George Knight, in his *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective* (2006). Ellen White stresses the importance of the uniqueness of the human being, the constructive way of perceiving the child or the student as a unique creature of God and the great potential God has put in each of us. At the same time, the author of the research believes that human beings should construct their realities in a pragmatic way, raising themselves as creative thinkers, finding solutions to problems, respecting human potentiality and one's own rhythm, and also creating productive environments that nurture human potentiality, which is a gift from God. If by the pragmatic way, it refers to putting into practice what is taken into account in the theory of and about something, the socio-critical paradigm from its ontological, epistemic, methodological, and procedural areas of knowledge is socio-constructed in a theoretical-practical way from subject to subject.

## **Research design**

The focus of the research is an in-depth investigation and exploration to discover and understand the experiences of teachers in a specific educational (Joyner et al., 2013). This study has a qualitative research design, with the purpose of understanding a particular field of expertise by analyzing the data of the study (Merriam, 2009). It will be conducted as action research because the researcher's role goal is to describe, understand, and discover the perceptions of the gifted education approach. This will improve the researcher's practice and

will enhance curriculum and professional development in the designated school.

### **Research type**

The type of inquiry for the research will be participatory action research (PAR). Action research is “a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives”, seeking to “engage the complex dynamics involved in any social context” (Stringer, 2014, p. 27) and will serve the purpose of this study with the dynamic involvement of the teachers. Stringer’s action research framework (2014, p. 78) takes into consideration the following elements: (a) research planning, (b) gathering information, (c) analyzing data, and (d) communication. At the same time, Stringer points out that the outcomes of action research give clarity and understanding, providing the basis for resolving the problem on which the study focuses. Furthermore, action research seeks to produce empathetic accounts that embody significant experiences, leading to a greater understanding of the social realities, as a constructivist approach.

PAR has become an increasingly important methodology within social studies (Kendon et al., 2007, p. 1). PAR is cyclical, that is the researcher and the participants identify an issue or situation that needs to change. The cycle consists of research action, and then reflection, and developing context-specific methods. One of the gains that the researcher could have in the PAR approach is that it intersects theory, practice, and politics between participants and researcher, nurturing self-reflection and internal critique. Additionally, the PAR planner presented by Kemmis et al. (2014) will enhance the critical side of the action research for my study.

## **Research setting**

The Romanian elementary school of which the researcher is the principal and for which she is conducting the study is well-known for its constructivist and pragmatic educational practices. This elementary school is going to be the context of the research and the recipient of the PAR.

Specifically, Transylvania International School is an international Adventist institution of education established in Romania, with K-9 levels of study, nurturing a holistic philosophy of education and having a dynamic environment of learning. Since 2018, in the school, there have been on a yearly basis high ability students enrolled in accelerated programs. Its inspiration so far was the USA's overall approach to giftedness. This research has the purpose of giving a systematic approach to the empirical findings so far.

## **Participants**

The sample is purposeful and is made up of eight teachers who have taught at least one year in this school and are planning to stay at least one year more so that there is a continuation of the research process and outcomes. The inclusion criteria are: (a) open to innovation; (b) provide enrichment to the study; (c) teachers at Transylvania International School that are having high ability students in their classes; (d) are willing to participate in the study; (e) have at least one year experience in teaching high ability students; (f) have at least one course taken in special education; (g) that share the beliefs of a holistic approach to education.

## **Data collection**

The data will be approached with a holistic perspective that seeks rigor, validity, and criticality. Data collection is co-constructed and is going to happen during the span of training

and action research. It nurtures iterative research, ensuring that the data collection is cyclical, emergent, and recursive.

After a literature review, which will imply a “broad scan, focused review, and comprehensive critique” (Joyner et al., 2013, p. 53), Ravitch and Mittenfelner Carl’s (2016) observations on data collection will provide the audit trail and trustworthiness for the study.

The data will be generated in a twofold manner:

1. researcher generated data—observation and analysis, which will have as an instrument the field notes;
2. participants generated data—journals which contain reflexive writing during the training and the action research; documents during the training and the action research (lesson plans, class material, student giftedness diagnose etc.); interviews.

Data will have multiple sources, to support the triangulation process: (a) qualitative evidence emerging from the application of techniques to the subjects of study; (b) group trainings for the participants; (c) researcher; (d) school documents; (e) Montemorelos University advisors.

At this stage, there will be taken the following steps:

1. Before the training, there will be a conversation with the teachers to see if they want to participate, giving them the informed consent in the aftermath.
2. Then, an initial written interview will be provided to see what their current practices in the classroom are and what are their perceptions. This will help the researcher understand their previous knowledge and organize the training to make a connection to the new information they will learn.
3. During the training, the participants will receive the journal form to complete after each session, with questions like: ‘What did you learn?’, ‘What did you like the most?’, ‘What can be improved?’, ‘Is there any question or comment?’

4. The researcher will use the observation form when going to their classes and observe how they implement the new knowledge and skills
5. After these steps, it will be conducted a semi-structured interview with the teachers to evaluate the strategies for gifted education that surfaced during the action plan.

Relevant to this research is also the participant observation method. Participant observation is a method of data collection in which the researcher takes part in all the aspects of the research that involves fieldwork, to be a part of the research from within, in its natural context (Given, 2008, p. 598). Considered as being appropriate to study social phenomena, participant observation allows thorough understanding and interpretation, prioritizing firsthand access to the real world of the social context within and grasping the deeper meanings.

The participant observation technique will include (a) direct observation of the participants in the study—during the training and the action research; (b) participant-as-observer during the action research; (c) complete observer during the training of the participants, hermeneutical endeavor, and the action research.

The participant observation technique is suitable for this study because the setting of the study involves a previous relationship of the researcher with participants, which could remove some possible challenges that could consist of permission to collect data, establishing credibility, and earning the trust of the observed. It also benefits the whole group of participants, giving them the possibility of professional development.

### **Researcher's role**

The roles that the researcher will take in this research are inspired by Glesne's (2006, 2011, 2016) insights: the participant as an observer; anticipatory of methods and strategies; a

learner; an analyst; reassuring with the participants; grateful for the input the participants bring in. Given the fact that the teachers in the sample are colleagues from the researcher's school in which she is a principal, the field relationships are betwixt friendship, collegiality, and power.

## **Data analysis**

During the process of data analysis, there will be used analytic tools, meaning mental strategies when coding and micro-analyzing, understood as a form of open coding.

The analytic tools used in the research are inspired by Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 69) and include:

1. The use of questioning;
2. Making comparisons;
3. Thinking about the various meanings of a word;
4. Using the flip-flop technique;
5. Drawing upon personal experience;
6. Waving the red flag;
7. Looking at the language;
8. Looking at emotions that are expressed and the situations that aroused them;
9. Thinking in terms of metaphors and similes;
10. Looking for the negative case;
11. 'So what?' and 'What if?' reflections.

Additionally, and more technically, Yin's (2006, p. 186) five phases of analysis and their interactions will be used, including: (1) compiling or formally refining/sorting in a database; (2) disassembling, by using substantive themes; (3) reassembling and recombination might be done graphically, in tabular form (this stage, like the previous one, could be repeated during the research); (4) interpretation of data, using accompanying tables or graphics, that will become the key analytic portion; (5) concluding, by relating to the interpretation in the previous phase.

## Trustworthiness

The study aims to prove the legitimacy of evidence, codification, categorization, triangulation, and saturation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated some aspects regarding trustworthiness, which I consider beneficial to my research. This research is an authentic attempt to create a curriculum for teachers. As principal, the researcher noticed many times the struggles the teachers have when lacking the know-how and that is why she chose to be a participant, a reflector, and a critique of this initiative, which will benefit the teachers from the school and, hopefully, this research will become a pilot study.

The way the researcher tries to secure credibility of the research is through a prolonged engagement, which means to stay in the field until data saturation. Furthermore, the researcher will have persistent observations that imply multiple influences—what is important and what is not, different ways of interpretation etc. Additionally, will be made use of triangulation, referential adequacy and the research is going to have converging lines of inquiry, with an emphasis from the beginning on the triangulation of data collection, data analysis (multiple sources), and triangulation of methods. This research doesn't claim it could be replicated entirely in another school with a similar number of sample participants. This approach is dependent on the context, the training, the environment etc. and that is why the transferability of this study is up to the reader/ teacher/ researcher of the outcomes.

During the collection, analysis, and reporting of data, the researcher will try to be as precise as possible, in order to allow future readers to make judgments by themselves. At the same time, the researcher chose a purposive sample and a specific setting for the study to maximize the information and, thus, the possibility of transferability. Dependability is a means to show the reliability of the research and that is why, for future transferability, the researcher will provide her audience

enough evidence by using triangulation of methods and data, so that in similar contexts and with similar subjects, the methods could be repeated.

Understood as intent to neutrality and objectivity, avoiding giving the findings a shape that could be considered biased or with a certain motivation, the researcher will undertake conformability, following the six steps that Lincoln and Guba (1985) present, by reviewing the research as follows: (a) raw data (written field notes, documents etc.); (b) data reduction and analysis of products (summaries and condensed notes, working concepts etc.); (c) data reconstruction and synthesis products (themes that I developed, findings and conclusions etc.); (d) process notes; (e) material relating to intentions and dispositions (such as personal notes, expectations etc.); (f) instrument development information (observation formats, preliminary schedules etc.).

Overall, the trustworthiness scheme used is as follows:

- For credibility it will be used triangulation of methods, member checking, and a deep engagement in understanding the context.
- For transferability there will be provided rich details of the participants, the research context, and the methods used.
- Reflexivity will be developed as a strategy to reflect on the bias as a principal and researcher and how it might influence the process
- For dependability it will be made use of the audit trail and peer debriefing, seeking feedback from fellow researchers.
- For confirmability will be used coders and it will be assured consistency of the methods and reflective journaling

Finally, in Appendix 1, the research questions are correlated to different sources of data collection.

## **Ethical considerations**

In Greek tradition, ethics encompassed the study of the frameworks that underlie judgments considered to be appropriate or not and the substance of the judgments themselves (Given, 2008). European conventionality views ethics in a binary way—something is good or wrong, moral, or immoral, just, or unjust. Normative ethics and moral theories are “frameworks organized around either principle to guide decision making or relationship dynamics to guide human conduct” (Given, 2008, p. 274). Deontological ethics would require, in this case, proper conduct from the researcher.

To preserve an ethical code during the research, the author of the study will ensure respect towards participants, which includes voluntary actions and informed consent beneficence by not creating sensitive areas during the study that could emotionally distress the participants, assuring privacy and justice among the participants, by sharing equal research benefits and burdens (Glesne, 2014, p. 159). The researcher will try to ensure honesty regarding the research in relationship with the participants, weigh competing ethical obligations, make the results accessible, and protect and preserve the records. The research does not imply any human risk. To all these are added the ethical considerations that Montemorelos University provides, whereas the research committee’s advice will be taking into consideration throughout the research process.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The present study is based on the premises of qualitative research, with a participatory action research type of inquiry—the research process is flexible and adaptable, in a natural/ real-world setting, with real human experiences and with the opportunity of interpreting the process of action research. Hopefully, this research will come up with a better understanding of gifted education and teacher training in Romania.

Furthermore, the researcher as the instrument will enhance her expertise and contribute to the academic, social, and educational field of study. This study provides the rationale for developing a training program to deliver tailored education for gifted students in Adventist schools. The personalized teaching approach may drive the current teaching practices closer to the blueprint of Adventist education.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1

### *Triangulation process correlated to the research questions*

Questions	Literature review	Observation	Interview	Documents
1. What are the current practices and strategies used by the teachers when teaching gifted students?	x	x	x	x
2. What is the design of the proposed action plan for gifted education?	x		x	x
3. What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the gifted education program that was implemented?		x	x	x
4. How can the gifted education plan be improved after its implementation in elementary school?	x	x	x	
5. After conducting this study on gifted education how will my skills as a principal, trainer, and researcher improve?		x	x	x