

Larisa V. Shavinina  
*Editor*

# International Handbook on Giftedness

*Part One*

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*This handbook is dedicated to Professor Marina A. Kholodnaya, whose own research on giftedness provided the foundation for my research and shaped my vision of the field, and to my wonderful sons Alexander and Denis.*

## Preface

*If you publish . . . you are trying to create something that is original, that stands out from the crowd. . . Above all, you want to create something you are proud of. . .*

*Richard Branson (2002, p. 57).*

After the publication of my bestselling *International Handbook on Innovation*, publishers from around the world began to invite me to work on new books with them. When Springer invited me to prepare the *International Handbook on Giftedness*, I was on a maternity leave with my 3-months-old and my 5-year-old was just starting school. I, however, had wanted to prepare such a Handbook for a long time and was waiting for just the right moment to dive right into such an endeavor. The time had come and I agreed to prepare a Handbook that would expose readers to new views, great discoveries, and significant advancements of scientific knowledge, exactly as Richard Feynman advised (see his opening quote at the beginning of the introductory chapter).

I have always been convinced of the paramount significance of the topic of giftedness and gifted education to the world as a whole. There is no doubt that gifted individuals were, are, and will be extremely important to society. One way to understand the history of human civilization is via inventions and discoveries of the gifted. All human cultural development builds on the amazing technological, scientific, educational, and moral achievements of the human mind. Today, people increasingly realize that gifted and talented individuals are even more important than in the past. Thus, industrial competition is increasingly harsh and organizations of all types must continuously bring new products and services to the global market. To survive, companies need creative and talented employees whose novel ideas are to a certain extent a necessity for the companies' continued existence and future success. Consequently, modern society desperately requires highly able citizens who can produce innovative solutions to current challenges and contribute new ideas that promote the development and growth of markets for novel products or services. The gifted thus remain an extremely important source of innovation and renewal worldwide.

Also, everyone knows that contemporary society has many unsolved problems, including demographic, medical, environmental, political, economic, moral, and social problems. Accordingly, modern society is characterized by a strong need for highly able minds that can productively solve these numerous problems and make appropriate social decisions. In short, intellectually creative citizens are guarantees of political stability, economic growth, scientific and cultural enrichment, psychological health, and the general prosperity of any society in the 21st century.

The future will therefore be synonymous with talent, since it will need an extremely high saturation of gifted people in all areas of human endeavor. Despite the evident importance of gifted individuals in any society and many written books, the phenomenon of giftedness is far from being well understood. Because of this, the proposed handbook on giftedness will be a valuable contribution aimed at the advanced understanding of giftedness and its development. This is therefore an exceptionally timely endeavor.

As the introductory chapter indicates, my vision for this Handbook was indeed different from any previous publication. From the very beginning of the project I considered that the major goal of the Handbook should be to significantly advance the field of giftedness research and gifted education by analyzing the latest developments in the existing areas and by presenting innovative, emerging trends. As the editor of this important Handbook, I tried to be as objective as possible in my selection of contributing authors and topics to be covered. My purpose was to present the field of giftedness research and gifted education as it is today: with all its different points of views, agreements, and disagreements, which, I am convinced, are essential for further progress of our field. It does not mean at all that I like or dislike certain chapters. My position as a research is reflected in my chapters in this volume. My editorial efforts were governed by a maximal objectivity aimed at unprecedented advancement of research on giftedness and gifted education.

The reason why I have been wishing to create this Handbook for a long time is that previous publications in the area did not cover all facets of giftedness and gifted education and did not present some emerging trends in research and practice. In short, it was impossible to find any handbook that would cover all possible aspects of high ability and that would provide clear answers to issues raised by scholars and practitioners alike. I hence came to believe that the time was ripe for an *International Handbook on Giftedness*—a volume that would comprehensively cover all facets of giftedness and thus would help guide research and practice during next decades and, therefore, would advance the field. All in all, I tried to create the Handbook “that is original, that stands out from the crowd,” a volume that every contributing author and myself “are proud of,” exactly as Richard Branson recommended.

It is important to note that the conventional understanding of handbook—as a compendium of review chapters suggesting a guide to practice—seems to be very restricted in the context of the area of giftedness and gifted education. The “handbook” title suggests a guide to practice only in cases where the body of knowledge is understood to be complete and more or less unchanging. For example, “Handbook of Mathematical Formulae,” or “Handbook of Motorcycle Repair.” However, the study of giftedness is a body of knowledge under dynamic theoretical development. For instance, for the very first time this Handbook introduces many new types of giftedness that have not been discussed in previous publications (see my introductory chapter for a detailed description of its novelty and originality). Due to this very reason, I prefer to use “the International Handbook *on* Giftedness” instead of “the International Handbook *of* Giftedness.” I hope readers will find the present chapters lively and provocative, stimulating greater interest in giftedness and gifted education.

The Handbook covers a wide range of topics in giftedness. Specifically, it offers a broad analysis of what giftedness is, how it is developed, assessed, and affects individuals, groups, organizations, societies, and the world as a whole, as well as what new trends in gifted education are and what successful pedagogical practices exist today. The Handbook will therefore serve as an authoritative resource on all



aspects of theory, research, and practice of giftedness and gifted education. I hope that readers of this Handbook will view it as serving that function.

The target international audience for the Handbook is broad and includes a wide range of specialists—both researchers and practitioners, as well as policy makers—in the areas of giftedness, gifted education, psychology, education, arts, economics, management and business science. Non-specialists will also be interested readers of this Handbook (e.g., parents of gifted and talented children) and it will be useful in a wide range of undergraduate and graduate courses. Because the coverage of the Handbook is broad enough, it can be read as a reference on an as-needed basis for those who would like information about a particular topic, or from cover to cover either as a sourcebook or as a textbook in a course dealing with giftedness and/or gifted education. In short, anyone interested in knowing the wide range of issues regarding giftedness and gifted education will want to read this Handbook.

The Handbook hopes to accomplish at least four things for readers. First, the reader will obtain comprehensive expert insight into the latest research and practice in the field of giftedness. Indeed, the world's leading specialists agreed to contribute to this Handbook. Second, the Handbook will present many facets of giftedness, which were not discussed in previously published handbooks. This breadth of coverage will allow the reader to acquire a comprehensive and panoramic picture of the nature of giftedness and gifted education within a single Handbook. Third, the reader will develop an accurate sense of what spurs gifted and talented individuals toward their extraordinary achievements and exceptional performances. Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, the reader will be able to apply the ideas and findings presented in the Handbook to critically consider how best to foster personal abilities and talents.

I wanted to do almost impossible with this Handbook: to cover every facet of the field of giftedness as it is today. As readers will proceed from one chapter to another, they will see that ultimately this became possible. I am very proud of the final product: the Handbook is indeed exceptional in many ways (this issue will be addressed in the introduction).

There are many people to thank for helping this Handbook come to fruition. Most important are the authors: I thank them very much for their willingness to undertake the difficult and challenging task of contributing chapters. I am particularly grateful to Professor Marina A. Kholodnaya, my former Ph.D. supervisor, who to a great extent 'made' me a researcher, developing my perception of great scientific problems. She continually inspires me to undertake innovative endeavors. I am especially grateful to my research assistants—Marianna Medvid, Jeanette Gallina, and David Lefebvre—for their successful handling of numerous duties on this outstanding project in addition to their regular jobs and university assignments. They were simply excellent during many months of the preparation of the Handbook: I could not do it better myself. I am also grateful to my editors at Springer—Bernadette Ohmer, Maria Jonckheere, Astrid Noordermeer, and Bernadette Deelen—who provided just the right blend of freedom, encouragement, patience, and guidance needed for successful completion of this great project. Special thanks to Tamara Welschot at Springer who initiated this project.

I also wish to acknowledge my debt of gratitude to my parents, Anna Shavinina and Vladimir Shavinin, who aroused a passionate intellectual curiosity and love for challenges in me. Finally, I owe my biggest debt of gratitude to my husband, Evgueni Ponomarev, and our 8-year-old and 3-year-old sons, Alexander and Denis, respectively. In countless ways, Evgueni has been a true colleague, critic, manager, and

friend throughout a few years of the project. He provided the moral, financial, and technical support, and—more importantly—with the time I needed to complete this project. He did so by performing a number of great tasks, from cooking and administering PC problems when I worked at nights, to assuming the lion's share (and the lioness's, too) of child care for our Alexander and particularly for Denis, who was born just before the beginning of this project. Very simply, this is his Handbook, too.

I especially wish to thank Alexander and Denis, whose entry into the world taught me more about giftedness, gifted education, and the need to develop their versatile abilities especially when they are at those unique sensitive periods, than have any other events in my life. They were patient with me and curiously asked “when do you eventually finish this Handbook?” I sincerely hope that educational systems of all societies around the world, as well as parents and other caregivers, will be able to develop unique gifts and talents of each child on the Earth.

Larisa V. Shavinina

# Contents

## Part I Introduction

- 1 Understanding Giftedness: Introduction or on the Importance of Seeing Differently ..... 3  
Larisa V. Shavinina

## Part II The Nature of Giftedness

- 2 The History of Giftedness Research ..... 17  
Heidrun Stoeger
- 3 Essential Tensions Surrounding the Concept of Giftedness ..... 39  
David Yun Dai
- 4 Contemporary Models of Giftedness ..... 81  
Janet E. Davidson
- 5 A Feminine Perspective of Giftedness ..... 99  
Linda Kreger Silverman and Nancy B. Miller
- 6 An Expert Performance Approach to the Study of Giftedness ..... 129  
K. Anders Ericsson, Kiruthiga Nandagopal and Roy W. Roring
- 7 Debating Giftedness: Pronat vs. Antinat ..... 155  
François Gagné
- 8 The Arbitrary Nature of Giftedness ..... 205  
Nancy B. Hertzog
- 9 Gifted and Thriving: A Deeper Understanding of Meaning of GT ..... 215  
Michael F. Sayler
- 10 A Unique Type of Representation is the Essence of Giftedness: Towards a Cognitive-Developmental Theory ..... 231  
Larisa V. Shavinina

### **Part III The Neuropsychology of Giftedness**

- 11 Neuropsychological Characteristics of Academic and Creative Giftedness** ..... 261  
John G. Geake
- 12 The Neural Plasticity of Giftedness** ..... 275  
M. Layne Kalbfleisch
- 13 Working Memory, the Cognitive Functions of the Cerebellum and the Child Prodigy** ..... 295  
Larry R. Vandervert

### **Part IV Developmental and Cognitive Foundations of Giftedness**

- 14 Developmental Trajectories of Giftedness in Children** ..... 319  
Christoph Perleth and Annett Wilde
- 15 Highly Gifted Young People: Development from Childhood to Adulthood** ..... 337  
Miraca U.M. Gross
- 16 Talent Development Across the Lifespan** ..... 353  
Roger Moltzen
- 17 Creative Cognition in Gifted Youth** ..... 381  
Katherine N. Saunders Wickes and Thomas B. Ward
- 18 A Metacognitive Portrait of Gifted Learners** ..... 397  
Marion A. Barfurth, Krista C. Ritchie, Julie A. Irving and Bruce M. Shore

### **Part V Personality of the Gifted, Individual Differences, and Gender-Related Issues**

- 19 Personality Qualities That Help or Hinder Gifted and Talented Individuals** ..... 421  
Reva Friedman-Nimz and Olha Skyba
- 20 Emotional Life and Psychotherapy of the Gifted in Light of Dabrowski's Theory** ..... 437  
P. Susan Jackson, Vicky F. Moyle and Michael M. Piechowski
- 21 On Individual Differences in Giftedness** ..... 467  
Andrzej Sekowski, Malgorzata Siekanska and Waldemar Klinkosz
- 22 A Theory of Talent Development in Women of Accomplishment** ..... 487  
Sally M. Reis and Erin E. Sullivan

## **Part VI Twice-Exceptional Gifted Individuals and Suicide-Related Issues**

- 23 Twice Exceptional: Multiple Pathways to Success** ..... 507  
Judy L. Lupart and Royal E. Toy
- 24 Gifted Learners Who Drop Out: Prevalence and Prevention** ..... 527  
Michael S. Matthews
- 25 Understanding Suicidal Behavior of Gifted Students: Theory, Factors, and Cultural Expectations** ..... 537  
Laurie A. Hyatt and Tracy L. Cross

## **Part VII Types of Giftedness**

- 26 In Search of Emotional–Social Giftedness: A Potentially Viable and Valuable Concept** ..... 559  
Reuven Bar-On and Jacobus G. (Kobus) Maree
- 27 The Two Pioneers of Research on Creative Giftedness: Calvin W. Taylor and E. Paul Torrance** ..... 571  
Kyung Hee Kim
- 28 Creative Giftedness: Beginnings, Developments, and Future Promises** . 585  
James C. Kaufman, Scott B. Kaufman, Ronald A. Beghetto, Sarah A. Burgess and Roland S. Persson
- 29 Imaginary Worldplay as an Indicator of Creative Giftedness** ..... 599  
Michele Root-Bernstein
- 30 Development of Gifted Motivation: Longitudinal Research and Applications** ..... 617  
Adele Eskeles Gottfried and Allen W. Gottfried
- 31 Leadership Giftedness: Is It Innate or Can It Be Developed?** ..... 633  
Karen B. Rogers

## **Part VIII Domain-Specific and Multiple Giftedness**

- 32 Scientific Talent: The Case of Nobel Laureates** ..... 649  
Larisa V. Shavinina
- 33 Understanding Mathematical Giftedness: Integrating Self, Action Repertoires and the Environment** ..... 671  
Shane N. Phillipson and Rosemary Callingham
- 34 Cinema Talent: Individual and Collective** ..... 699  
Dean Keith Simonton

<b>35 Reading, Writing, and Raising the Bar: Exploring Gifts and Talents in Literacy</b> .....	713
Rachel Schnur and Sarah G. Marmor	
<b>36 The Elusive Muse: Understanding Musical Giftedness</b> .....	727
Roland S. Persson	
<b>37 Giftedness and Talent in Sport</b> .....	751
Jacques H.A. van Rossum	
<b>38 On Entrepreneurial Giftedness</b> .....	793
Larisa V. Shavinina	
<b>39 Ilk Hunting: Newbies, Cyberpunks, Coders and the Search for Elusive, Ego-Twisted, Talented Computer Hackers</b> .....	809
Thomas E. Heinzen and Louis M. Picciano	
<b>40 What Makes a Gifted Educator? A Design for Development</b> .....	825
Marion Porath	
<b>41 Understanding Managerial Talent</b> .....	839
Larisa V. Shavinina and Marianna Medvid	
<b>42 Multiple Giftedness in Adults: The Case of Polymaths</b> .....	853
Robert Root-Bernstein	
<b>Part IX Giftedness, Society, and Economy</b>	
<b>43 Families of Gifted Children</b> .....	873
Abraham Reichenberg and Erika Landau	
<b>44 Large-Scale Socioeconomic, Political, and Cultural Influences on Giftedness and Talent</b> .....	885
Don Ambrose	
<b>45 Gifts, Talents, and Their Societal Repercussions</b> .....	905
Dean Keith Simonton	
<b>46 The Unwanted Gifted and Talented: A Sociobiological Perspective of the Societal Functions of Giftedness</b> .....	913
Roland S. Persson	
<b>47 On Giftedness and Economy: The Impact of Talented Individuals on the Global Economy</b> .....	925
Larisa V. Shavinina	

## **Part X Assessment and Identification of Giftedness**

- 48 The Measurement of Giftedness** ..... 947  
Linda Kreger Silverman
- 49 Identifying Academically Talented Students: Some General Principles, Two Specific Procedures** ..... 971  
David F. Lohman
- 50 The Johns Hopkins Talent Search Model for Identifying and Developing Exceptional Mathematical and Verbal Abilities** ..... 999  
Linda E. Brody
- 51 A New Approach to the Identification of Intellectually Gifted Individuals** ..... 1017  
Larisa V. Shavinina

## **Part XI Recent Advances in Gifted Education**

- 52 New Developments in Gifted Education** ..... 1035  
Gary A. Davis
- 53 The English Model of Gifted Education** ..... 1045  
Deborah Eyre
- 54 Enhancing Creativity in Curriculum** ..... 1061  
Joyce VanTassel-Baska and Bronwyn MacFarlane
- 55 Acceleration: Meeting the Academic and Social Needs of Students** ... 1085  
Nicholas Colangelo and Susan Assouline
- 56 Teaching for Wisdom in Public Schools to Promote Personal Giftedness** ..... 1099  
Michel Ferrari
- 57 DISCOVER/TASC : An Approach to Teaching and Learning That Is Inclusive Yet Maximises Opportunities for Differentiation According to Pupils' Needs** ..... 1113  
B. Wallace and C. J. Maker
- 58 Future Problem Solving in Gifted Education** ..... 1143  
Bonnie L. Cramond
- 59 Practical Intelligence and Wisdom in Gifted Education** ..... 1157  
Mary Anne Heng and Kai Yung (Brian) Tam
- 60 Recent Developments in Technology: Implications for Gifted Education** ..... 1173  
Michael C. Pyryt†