

Tensions and Dynamics of Giftedness as Disability Than Divine-Gift Among Children in Africa: Søren Kierkegaard's Creatio Imago Dei as Panacea

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Abstract

*Gifted and talented children in Africa are Imago Dei, but do not fulfill their potential for the following reasons among many: i) lack of research (dogma, educational, psychology, cultural, health, ethics), about the efficiency of gifted children in Africa, ii) weakness in identifying giftedness, iii) lack of suitable teachers, teachers' attitude problems, absence of invitational education and inclusive schooling, iii) the church does not think that it is her responsibility to diagnose and nurture gifted children, iv) based on reason one above, there is lack of psychological and social support of professionals who are experts in the psychology of the gifted and dedicated for the gifted, including ethical issues in educating and counseling gifted children and v) the very limited variety of educational programs for the gifted. vi) there is also a disconnect between priorities and practice in African family, religion, school, and socio-political spheres. This study is an interdisciplinary response to the call to explore in more detail children's actions and the ways in which they grow, learn, communicate, create their own/shared cultures within a community and in relation to participation. Child psychology is in a sharp decline in our modern society, especially in Africa where socio-culturally set priorities on the child and the youth are replaced by money-making and single-minded business. Gifted children have a number of problems and challenges which need some Christian address and balance. Limited studies have addressed the challenges they face, and some members of communities and the general public think that gifted children have no problems, and even if they have, they can cope. **gestalt** refers to wholistic – a human being as a psychosomatic-nous-unit. This study employs Søren Kierkegaard's Creatio Imago Dei method, a historical methodology to analyze and characterize the growth of the knowledge base in gifted education, the Well-Being theory and Logotherapy.*

Keywords: Depression, dogma, *Imago Dei*, ethics, *gestalt*, giftedness, isolation, logo-therapy, perfectionism, psychology 'the talented', underperformance, well-being theory.

1.0 Introduction

This study focuses on gifted children as *Imago Dei*; to be created in the Image of God means “Being [fully] Human (Kanga, 2015). The study is consciously a pro-science and pro-children. One of my passions is the idea that, children who have certain intellectual abilities, Higher IQs, gifted children, talented children, have a hard time in our current educational and social system. It is actually hard for them surviving without a lot of suffering, and surviving without a lot of downsides, which is counterintuitive. Children who have certain intellectual abilities, Higher IQs, gifted children, talented children are called sometimes *Silicon Valley Nerds*, and they are arguably said to make the rest look bad. Two thoughts come to mind around this space: i) parenting in general, and ii) how they are received. These children are to be taken as *Imago Dei*. First and foremost, parenting any child comes with its highs and lows, but when raising a gifted child, the highs might look like Mt. Everest and lows like the Mariana Trench. The joys of parenting gifted children are many, as parents my tell. Parents glow with pride when their children start an underground newspaper or startle in amazement when they start speaking well ahead of schedule. However, parents may feel at a loss when dealing with the challenges of raising a gifted child. It is common a gifted child does not respond well to ‘conventional wisdom’. It is important to review some of the common issues parents of gifted children may encounter with tips and insights to help them along the way!

Secondly, how gifted, talented, and superior intelligent children and youth are defined, how they are educated, and how society receives them, varies considerably across time and across cultures. How they are taken, handled and educated today; especially in Africa, depends, in part, upon values and conceptualizations that may be generations old, but are still alive in the minds of the parents, guardians, the Church, decision-makers, and teachers. In order to understand the problem(s) in the current study we must reflect on the values of yester years.

In many settings, locally and globally; having special intellectual or creative abilities can be more of disability than divine-gift. Most of the time, the governance of institutions is set to the pace of the vast majority of people in the high-density middle of the ability curve. The challenges facing gifted children in African societies are those that have been part of them not because of their life experiences as any normal human being would have; but because of their peculiarity that they have not been properly treated by parties such as their own parents at family level, teachers in their academic encounters, religious institutions in their societies which were expected to play a more important role in ensuring that these children are treated in a way that they contribute positively to solving socio-economic issues facing African societies. Unfortunately, it is not coming to the attention of the society that gifted children are a blessing to humanity. With very few people in the world being expected to perform greatly above average in a population due to impressive mental abilities, we come to terms with the fact that we want to learn more about such people, from Albert Einstein a scientific whiz to Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven a musical prodigy, Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, James Aggrey of Ghana, Julius Kambarage Nyerere of Tanzania, Nelson Mandela of South Africa, and John Joseph Pombe Magufuli of Tanzania: people we like to regularly term ‘Gifted’. Gestalt approach is used throughout the study. Who are the gifted children? How would one be able to tell if one was such a person? It seems as though anyone with a mind that works beyond would be successful and content but is it necessarily true? Do these people go through any difficulties? All these are questions we ask ourselves about gifted people and in essence a gifted child since a gifted person is born gifted and understanding their ways and mentality must begin at that early stage.

This study attempts to address questions and challenges in the well-being of gifted children in Africa. The study tries to propose theological and pastoral answers to the questions and challenges the said children are facing. There is a lack of doctrine in understanding creation, family, children, religion, society, politics, health, education and socio-economic challenges. There is also lack of proper educational psychology, educational and guidance counseling, child psychology, parenting psychology and professional ethics for teachers. In Africa, counseling the gifted and talented is weak, this affects the gifted, the school and the family altogether. Identifying gifted children and the talented does not exist, and if it does exist, it is neglected, or rather poorly developed. The church counseling is very limited; it focuses on marriage counseling only. No one, or very few are professionally and ministry trained to counsel the gifted, the uncommon, the extra intelligent to enjoy normal life. On average, Africa also has a problem failing to differentiate between giftedness and talent. The prejudice which goes to the gifted and talented is sinful and destructive for senseless reasons like culture.

2.0 Literature Review

This literature review examines data and findings of other authors relative to a specified research question or questions. It is just one research methodology that is here-in used to address the problem of giftedness.

In 1993, Linda K. Silverman published *Counseling the Gifted and the Talented*. In her book Linda provides a framework for understanding giftedness, and considers the counseling process and strategies for counseling in the schools. Chapters include: *The Gifted Individual* by Linda Kreger Silverman herself, *The Quest for Meaning: Counseling Issues with Gifted Children and Adolescents* by Deirdre V. Lovecky; *A Developmental Model for Counseling the Gifted* by Linda Kreger Silverman herself, *Techniques for Preventive Counseling* by Linda Kreger Silverman herself, *Group Counseling with Gifted Students* by Nicholas Colangelo and Jean Sunde Peterson; *Counseling Gifted Learning Disabled: Individual and Group Counseling Techniques* by Sal Mendaglio; *Counseling Families* by Linda Kreger Silverman herself; *The Roles of Educational Personnel in Counseling the Gifted* by Joyce VanTassel-Baska and Lee Baska; *Academic Counseling for the Gifted* by Joyce Van Tassel-Baska; *Career Counseling* by Lind Kreger Silverman herself; *Assessment Tools for Counselors* by John F. Feldhusen *et al*; *Gifted Students at Risk* by Ken Seeley; *Multicultural Counseling* by Kathy Evans; and *Social Development, Leadership, and Gender Issues* by Linda Kreger Silverman herself. No explanation of as to who gives the gift and the talent to the gifted and the talented. It is one of the objectives of this study to argue that it is God who gives giftedness and talents to human beings.

In 2004, Joseph Renzulli, published *Identification of Students for Gifted and Talented Programs*. For Educational psychology, Renzulli is the best and mast-read. He dwells much on identification of students for gifted and talented programs (Renzulli, 2004:xxiii). The book is presented in a straightforward, no-nonsense fashion, the key research, ideas, and concepts in this ready-reference lends both wisdom and clarity to the pressing issues surrounding gifted and talented student identification; leading to enlightened policies and more effective practices. The only shortcomings are on not explaining giftedness and talents as God given.

In 2012, William Kuipers published *Enjoying the Gift of Being Uncommon: Extra Intelligent, Intense and Effective*. He asks: Quite often uncommon competence, creativity and drive remain hidden or partially used by its owners. Do the uncommon perceive the gift of

being uncommon as a millstone instead of an enjoyment? He introduces and illustrates three practices for Extra Intelligent People (XIPs) to become more effective in their work and private life, for their own sake and for the sake of their environment. These practices are based on ten years of experience in coaching XIPs and on various concepts from literature. Together they offer a practical tool for sustainable personal and career development of uncommonly intelligent and intense people. Himself being an Engineer and a Mathematician, he concludes that there is much to enjoy about being uncommon. But he as well does not discuss the dimension of God being the source of what he calls being uncommon.

In 2013, Linda Kreger Silverman does another book *Giftedness 101* in which chapter one is on invisible gifts (Silverman, 2013:1). Chapter two what is giftedness (Silverman, 2013:29), chapter three the crusade to vanquish prejudice against the gifted (Silverman, 2013:51), chapter four life at the extremes (Silverman, 2013. pp. 85). Chapter five the psychology of giftedness (Silverman, 2013:121), chapter six comprehensive assessment of giftedness (Silverman, 2013:155); and chapter seven optimal development of the gifted (Silverman, 2013:191). Key Features in Silverman's *Giftedness 101*: i) provides a concise, accessible overview of one of the most important and challenging topics in psychology and education, ii) Examines the concept of giftedness across the lifespan, iii) Covers both the intellectual assessment and development of gifted individuals as well as the psychological well-being issues of this population, iv) written by a prominent expert in the field of the psychology of giftedness.

This is the most thorough history, explanation, and call to action for gifted advocates you will find. Defines giftedness as it the potential for success or is it the experience of being an 'outsider' and "rising to the top" (Silverman, 2013:78). *Giftedness 101* addresses the unique psychological needs of gifted children, which are often manifested as 'feeling different', and examines special issues such as gifted children with learning disabilities, gender considerations, implications of socio-economic status, and more. *Giftedness 101* dispels common myths about giftedness and challenges the view that eminence is the true signifier of giftedness. It offers specific guidelines to psychologists, parents, and teachers; describes comprehensive assessment of the gifted; provides support for the twice exceptional; and focuses on the complex inner world of the gifted. *Giftedness 101* defines giftedness as a psychological reality with powerful ramifications throughout the lifespan. *Giftedness 101* will be a valuable, eye-opening resource for psychologists, educators, and other professionals who work with the gifted, as well as gifted individuals and their families. No explanation of as to who gives the gift and the talent to the gifted and the talented. It is one of the objectives of this study to argue that it is God who gives giftedness and talents to human beings.

In 2021, François Gagné published *Differentiating Giftedness from Talent: The DMGT Perspective on Talent Development*. Gagne's comprehensive volume explores the origins, development, and applications for François Gagné's Differentiating Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT). In an authoritative yet accessible style, Professor Gagné offers a holistic coverage of the DMGT, including its implications for the field, and its main divergent points with competing theories of talent development. Chapters guide readers through each of the five DMGT components, addressing the diversity of gifts, the contributions of Nature and Nurture, the most important personal qualities, the overemphasized power of outside agents, the key role of chance, and more. Gagne's book is filled with illustrative examples and vignettes from the author's estimable career, this book is the authoritative resource for researchers and students looking to understand the DMGT and its unique role in shaping gifted education as we know it today. He writes about talents and

gifts (Gagne, 2021: 48), and the nature and nurture aptitudes (Gagne, 2021:75). His shortcomings are in that he does not explain where the giftedness, the XIP, and the talent come from.

With so many needs in today's public education classroom, we cannot forget the needs of those who excel in the classroom, too. Gifted students face severe neglect in class due to the appearance of their competence and maturity. However, we quickly face losing the contributions of a major group of students as this neglect causes them to lose interest in their own education. As members of the society we must challenge ourselves to help gifted students reach their potential just as we attempt to do for all subgroups of students. The gifted often find themselves singled out due to the stigma, the prejudice, and discrimination of a gifted label by not only peers but also teachers and other school staff (Silverman, 2013:51). This stigma results in intense pressure, social isolation, and extra work for gifted children. Creating a classroom climate and curriculum suitable for gifted students will help all students succeed in school.

To illustrate this, in Ancient Rome the *pater familias* (skilled, talented and gifted) held power over the rest of the family. His power over his family would remain until he died or his children were freed from the *pater familias*. The *pater familias* was the oldest living male in the family. The ideal mother was called the Roman *matrona* (ideally skilled, talented, and gifted). The Roman *matrona* would be a strong and virtuous woman that was dedicated to the political advancement of her family (Shelton, 1998). Julius Caesar was a Roman Genius and Mastermind because of his intelligence in war and strategies to gain power, and also because the way he could shift the Roman Government and Roman people to his favor. The Roman Empire was one of the greatest ancient powers in world history, and Julius Caesar (100-44BC) its most outstanding military genius, politician and inventor. A brilliant strategist, Caesar led the Roman legions into many battles and won great victories. His best line was *I came, I saw, I conquered*. --- Latin phrase *veni, vidi, vici* in 47 BC, reporting back to Rome on a speedily successful campaign to defeat Pharnaces II, a prince of Pontus. But, as is in the Greek history, Shakespeare says he was hated, and killed (Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*).

In 1988, the Kenyan Minister for Education stated that 'gifted and talented children be identified early and be provided with special programs that will accelerate the development of their special gifts and talents. The formal recognition for educating gifted and talented students started in the 1990s as mentioned in the 1995 education and training policy (ETP) for Tanzania.

In 1999, when I was a Postgraduate Student at the University of Bristol, the British Government launched an education program for gifted and talented pupils as part of its Excellence in Cities initiative (EiC) which was initially designed to raise the educational achievement of very able pupils in state maintained secondary schools in inner-city areas. In Germany it was implemented in 2004 by the Ministry for Education, Science, Youth and Culture of the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany. The talent-class/gifted-education in Denmark actually began in Lyngby during the years 2001 to 2005 when Ole Kyed (psychologist and host of the conference) made a project for the public schools in Lyngby.

To sum up this literature review, I have surveyed books, scholarly articles, and some other sources relevant to creativity, giftedness, talent and extra intelligence in children and youth as particular issues of the current research. In it, I have provided a description,

summary, and critical evaluation of these works in relation to the research problem(s) being investigated.

3.0 Research Methodology: *Creatio Imago Dei*

This study employs the Søren Kierkegaard's *Creatio Imago Dei* and a historical methodology to analyze and characterize the growth of the knowledge base in gifted education. A historical methodology is used in this study to analyze and characterize the growth of the knowledge base in gifted education following the U.S. Department of Education's (1993) report, "National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent" (Jolly, *et al*, 2008:427-46). It contributes to gifted education in Africa, and in the world at large.

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855), was a Danish theologian, philosopher, poet, social critic, and religious author who is widely considered to be the first existentialist philosopher (Swenson, 2003:1, 254). Existential analysis is brought about by Kierkegaard who advanced the *Will to Meaning* as opposed to Alfred Adler's Nietzschean *Will to Power* or Sigmund Freud whose main idea was *Will to Pleasure*.

Rather than power or pleasure, and as it will be shown in this study, Logotherapy is founded upon the belief that striving to find meaning in life is the primary, most powerful motivating and driving force in humans (Marshall, *et al*, 2012). A short introduction to this system is given in Frankl's most famous book, *Man's Search for Meaning* (2006), in which he outlines how his theories helped him to survive his Holocaust experience and how that experience further developed and reinforced his theories.

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard wrote critical texts on organized religion, Christianity, morality, ethics, psychology, and the philosophy of religion, displaying a fondness for metaphor, irony, and parables. Much of his philosophical work deals with the issues of how one lives as a 'single individual', giving priority to concrete human reality over abstract thinking and highlighting the importance of personal choice and commitment (Gardiner, 1968:289). He was against literary critics who defined idealist intellectuals and philosophers of his time (Kierkegaard, 1846:301-1).

Kierkegaard's theological work focuses on Christian ethics, the instruction of the Church, the differences between purely objective proofs of Christianity, the infinite qualitative distinction between man and God, and the individual's subjective relationship to the God-Man Jesus the Christ (Lowrie, 1991:41) which came through faith (Duncan, 1976). Much of his work deals with Christian love. He was extremely critical of the doctrine and practice of Christianity as a state-controlled religion like the Church of Denmark. His psychological work explored the emotions and feeling of individuals when faced with life choices like sickness, despair, and death (Ostenfeld, 1972, Kierkegaard, 2013:13).

Some of Kierkegaard's key ideas include the concept of 'subjective and objective truths', the knight of faith, the recollection and repetition dichotomy, angst, the infinite qualitative distinction, faith as a passion, and the three stages of life's way. Kierkegaard describes these stages as follows:

These stages may be compared to those of the ages of man. The child is still in the primal immediate unity of the will with nature, as representing both his[her] own

nature and the nature which surrounds him[her]. The second stage, adolescence, when individuality is in process of becoming independent, is the living spirituality, the vitality of Spirit, which while setting no end before it as yet, moves forward, has aspirations, and takes an interest in everything which comes its way. The third is the age of manhood[womanhood]; this is the period of work for a particular end, to which the man[woman] makes himself[herself] subserviently, to which he[she] devotes his[her] energies. Finally, old age might be considered as a last stage, which having the Universal before it as an end, and recognizing this end, has turned back from the particular interests of life and work to the universal aim, the absolute final end, and has, as it were, gathered itself together out of the wide and manifold interests of actual outward existence and concentrated itself in the infinite depths of its inner life. Such are the determinations which follow in a logical manner from the nature of the Notion. At the close it will become apparent that even the original immediacy does not exist as immediacy, but is something posited. The child itself is something begotten (Hegel, 1895:266ff).

With Søren Kierkegaard, stage one is aesthetic, stage two, ethics, and stage three, religious. i) Aesthetics, or esthetics, is a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of beauty and taste, as well as the philosophy of art. It examines aesthetic values, often expressed through judgments of taste. ii) the second level of existence is the ethical. This is where an individual begins to take on a true direction in life, becoming aware of and personally responsible for good and evil and forming a commitment to oneself and others. One's actions at this level of existence have a consistency and coherence that they lacked in the previous sphere of existence. For many readers of Kierkegaard, the ethical is central. It calls each individual to take account of their lives and to scrutinize their actions in terms of absolute responsibility, which is what Kierkegaard calls repentance. iii) the third level of existence is the religious which sets of rules, laws etc.

With Søren Kierkegaard's *Creatio Imago Dei* we can ask ourselves, whom should the struggler desire to resemble other than God? Answering this question is important to victim and the victimizer, the isolator of the gifted child and the isolated gifted, the well noticed and the unnoticed persons. But if he/she himself/herself is something or wants to be something, this something is sufficient to hinder the resemblance. Only when he/she himself/herself becomes nothing, only then can God illuminate him/her so that he/she resembles God. However great he/she is, he/she cannot manifest God's likeness; God can imprint Himself in him/her only when he/she himself/herself has become nothing. When the ocean is exerting all its power, that is precisely the time when it cannot reflect the image of heaven, and even the slightest motion blurs the image; but when it becomes still and deep, then the image of heaven sinks into its nothingness. – Kierkegaard, *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*.

When articulating what makes the human being uniquely human, the Christian theological tradition, echoing Rabbinic Judaism, and Graeco-Roman traditions, has turned most often to the language of 'the Image of God', or *Creatio Imago Dei*. The classic text here is of course Genesis 1:27: "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created the". This declaration occurs at the end of the first creation narrative in the book Genesis, and its purpose is to signal the uniqueness of the human being in relation to the rest of the created order. Unlike the fish of the sea or the birds of the air, unlike vegetable and plant life, unlike all other creatures that either creep upon the earth or soar in the heavens, the human being alone somehow images God.

Now, exactly *how* the human being images God, or what this image consists in, has never received a stable interpretation or consensus. In his commentary on Genesis, Claus Westermann catalogues no less than nine prominent interpretations of Genesis 1:27 over the centuries (Westermann, 1994:148-58).

The aim of this study is not to sort through these options and determine their relative merits. The study wants simply to throw another option into the mix, one that arrives at a slant in relation to the mainstream theological tradition of reflecting on the uniqueness of the human being as that creature that images God. Kierkegaard wrote three rounds of *Upbuilding Discourses* on this passage, one in 1847, one in 1848, and another in 1849. In what follows, we will turn primarily to the 1847 discourses. In the second of the three 1847 discourses, Kierkegaard does make allusion to Genesis 1:27 and offers a brief, and what we would call in this study apophatic, interpretation of the *Imago Dei*. Because God is essentially invisible, unable to be captured or represented through any kind of positive image or concept, it follows, writes Kierkegaard, that “the image of what is invisible will itself be invisible” (Kierkegaard, 2010:124). Imaging God, the human being images nothing, nothing visible, nothing that could stand out as a positive image or representation. The human being is called to be the invisible image of the invisible God (Kanga, 2015:64-83).

The first discourse sends the anxious reader out from human company, out from the noise of human society, out into nature where the lilies of the field and the birds of the air can become confidants and teachers for the anxious. Kierkegaard writes, “In relation to these teachers, so cheap that they ask for neither money nor deference, no misunderstanding is possible, because they keep silent—out of consideration for the anxious...[their] silence honors anxiety and the anxious person” (Kierkegaard, 2010, pp. 87). The bird and the lily, Kierkegaard writes, “live without anticipating the future, unaware of time, in the moment” (Kierkegaard, 2010, pp, 100). What this means is that these creatures live in relation to time and in relation to each other without “representation” (Kierkegaard, 2010, pp, 108).

Kierkegaard’s discourse stages the tragi-comedy of living on the basis of represented lack by playfully imagining a lowly lily comparing itself to a crown imperial flower and a wild wood pigeon comparing itself to “tame doves” who are domesticated and well-fed by a farmer (Kierkegaard, 2010:94-106). In each instance, the lack that is generated through comparison, which is “nothing *real*” (Kierkegaard, 2010:107), *causes* the creature to rush headlong into its own destruction. The lily withers by allowing itself to be uprooted, and the wild pigeon ends up on the farmer’s dinner table by trespassing into the tame doves’ territory. Rather than be content with their own “loveliness” (Kierkegaard, 2010:204) and “possibilities” (Kierkegaard, 2010:205) these creatures, which stage for the reader its own *human* folly, chase after fantasized possibilities. A God who is loving, a God of love and hope, creates all human beings in His own Image and Likeness. If human beings are the Image of God, the Image of God cannot misbehave toward gifted children and youth, the Image of God cannot mistreat itself. (Kierkegaard, 2010:205). All creatures are all fully human, it is a God’s new society with new life in Christ, full of possibilities, creativity, problem-identification, problem-solving skills, in the context of faith and healing. Giftedness is not a disability and not an inability, it is a gift from God the creator of the seen and the unseen.

4.0 Results and Discussion

The church consists of the people of God, and or God's people including the gifted or the talented children. The buildings may not be the church, but the Greek word *Ecclēsia*; the church primarily means the gathering or assembly. This Church belongs to those in the walls of the church, and those who are outside its walls as well. According to Charles Nyamiti, the Biblical origins of the term Church "designates an assembly of the people as a political force with full rights" (Nyamiti, 2007:3). The objectives of this study include (but not limited to); i) an ecclesiological definition and an explanation as to who are gifted children? ii) a psycho-ecclesial understanding on who are highly gifted children iii) how can the family in Africa , the African Church and the general public identify gifted children? iv) from a psycho-educational assessments, what are the characteristics of gifted children v) what are the medical problems associated with gifted children and vi) how can the family, the church and the society handle gifted children? The ministerial responsibility of the church falls upon the members as a *whole-gestalt*, by this we mean the family, the assembly itself, and the general public. The church of the New Testament had daily meetings, not monotonous meetings, but meetings of worship, fraternal communion, prayer, working in mutual edification, giving testimony of Christ, and taking care of the poor were not part of special programs, but rather everyday activities. A community of *Creatio Imago Dei*, has to be described as a community of faith in constant movement, a community of love.

The doctrine of God, that is Søren Kierkegaard *Creatio Imago Dei*, is foundational to the recognition of each child. Fundamentally, the essence of the *Imago Dei* encompasses: i) God's own self-actualization through humankind; ii) God's care for humankind. For Christian teachers, critical to such an approach would be the manner in which their teaching practice is informed and shaped by the doctrine of God. Such shaping involves an applied knowledge with reference to understanding people, and particularly the gifted as *Imago Dei*. Appropriating the work of Søren Kierkegaard was intended to bring out live the significance of 'the voices of the gifted children in the everyday life' within parenting, religion, teaching profession, and the political organization of socio-politico-economy. The study engages in a discourse analysis for probing unquestioned assumptions which open up possibilities for meaning-making and, consequently, increased intentionality of practice. Following selected methodology, the literature review focused on leading global experts of the current subject. Discussion explores the degree of fit with approaches to *Imago Dei*. According to Søren Kierkegaard, four discoveries are made possible: i) 'meaning making of *Imago Dei*', ii) 'how teachers understand *Imago Dei* does make a difference to how they view themselves as teachers, view students as image bearers, and craft their teaching.

It is important for parents of children with any special needs to meet with teachers early in the school year, work regularly with teachers, and stay both involved in their child's education and informed about gifted education in general. The key to raising gifted children is to respect their uniqueness, their opinions and ideas, and their dreams. It can be painful for parents when their children feel out of sync with others, but it is unwise to put too much emphasis on the importance of fitting in; children get enough of that message in the outside world. At home, children need to know that they are appreciated for being themselves. Exceptionally gifted children have two primary needs: i) they need to feel comfortable with themselves and with the differences that simultaneously open possibilities and create difficulty. ii) they need to develop their astonishing potential. There is a strong internal drive to develop one's abilities. From epidemiological point of view, medical professionals, have a

huge responsibility of making sure the general public is made fully aware of the problems of gifted children. This is important because it is prevention.

Gifted children are a blessing to all human communities, they are a creation created in the Image and the Likeness of God (Genesis. 1: 26-8 RSV). - *Creatio Imago Dei*. Their giftedness and talents are God-given. To elucidate gifted children, we perhaps need to first come to proper understanding of giftedness. Giftedness can be defined as children or youth who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creativity, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities. From education point of view, gifted children are students with gifts and talents to perform — or have the capability to perform — at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains. They require modification(s) to their educational experience(s) to learn and realize their potential¹.

Gifted children are those children where such advancement occurs on a range of human endeavors or the child who is in some aspects of human potential and/or achievement far advanced beyond what normally would be expected of a child of his/her chronological age. Because of this, that child has particular needs and problems, which need specific attention. Talented children: are those where such advancement occurs in one specific aspect of human endeavor, say, talented in sport, art, music or mathematics. Intellectual giftedness is an intellectual ability significantly higher than average. The term *gifted children* was first used in 1869 by Francis Galton. He referred to adults who demonstrated exceptional talent in some area as gifted, for example, a gifted chemist. Children could inherit the potential to become a gifted adult, and Galton referred to these children as gifted children. Lewis Terman expanded Galton's view of gifted children to include high IQ. In the early 1900s, he began his long-term study of gifted children, whom he defined as children with IQs of 140 or more. His study found that IQ alone could not predict success in adulthood. Leta Stetter Hollingworth, too, believed that the potential to be gifted was inherited. However, she felt that providing a nurturing home and school environment were also important in the development of that potential.

Highly gifted children tend to be those who demonstrate asynchronous development. Due to their high cognitive abilities and high intensities they experience and relate to the world in unique ways. These children are often found as a result of extremely high scores on an individually scored IQ tests, generally above the 140 IQ range. Others may be prodigies in areas such as math, science, language and/or the arts. Profoundly gifted children can score in excess of 170 IQ. Highly gifted children demonstrate characteristics such as the extreme need to: i) learn at a much faster pace, ii) process material to a much greater depth, and iii) show incredible intensity in energy, imagination, intellectual prowess, sensitivity, and emotion which are not typical in the general population.

The child of 160+ is as different from the child of 130 IQ as that child is different from the child of average ability. Current research suggests that there may be higher incidence of children in this high range than previously thought. Due to their unique characteristics, these children are particularly vulnerable. Highly gifted children need a specialized advocacy because very little has been done to develop appropriate curriculum and non-traditional options for these children.

¹ Sternberg, Robert J., *et al.* (2005). *Conceptions of Giftedness; and* (2011). *Explorations in Giftedness*. Cambridge University Press.

When it comes to how to identify giftedness, Joseph Renzulli is very helpful. Ranzulli and other psychologists, like Sattler *et al*, during the 20th century, gifted children were often classified via IQ tests, however, recent developments in theories of intelligence have raised serious questions regarding the appropriate uses and limits of such testing (Sattler et al, 2000, Renzulli, 2004). Process for testing include early childhood language development (Sattler et al, 2000:33-6), motor skills (Sattler et al, 2000:3-10; 25-9,). It may be somewhat surprising that it is possible to predict with reasonable accuracy if a very young child is gifted. Research has shown that gifted children tend to gain skills faster and with more ease than normal children and this is why a differentiated school curriculum is required for such children. Therefore, this advanced development can and does show up in early life. The following milestones have been gathered over many years of giftedness-research, made public, and are presented here as a guideline.

Table 1: Motor skills:

Ability	Normal Age	Gifted Age (30% Advanced)
<i>Plays with rattle</i>	<i>3 months</i>	<i>2.1 months</i>
<i>Pulls strings adaptively</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>4.9</i>
<i>Holds objects (Finger + Thumb)</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>6.3</i>
<i>Holds crayon adaptively</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>7.7</i>
<i>Scribbles spontaneously</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>9.1</i>
<i>Folds paper</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>14.7</i>
<i>Draws a person with two parts</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>33.6</i>
<i>Copies a triangle</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Draws a person with neck, hands and clothes</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>50.4</i>

Table 2: Cognitive language skills:

Ability	Normal Age	Gifted Age (30% Advanced)
<i>Social smile at people</i>	<i>1.5 months</i>	<i>1.05 months</i>
<i>Searches with eyes for sound</i>	<i>2.2</i>	<i>1.54</i>
<i>Vocalizes 2 different sounds</i>	<i>2.3</i>	<i>1.61</i>
<i>Says 'Dada' or equivalent</i>	<i>7.9</i>	<i>5.53</i>
<i>Responds to name and 'no'</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>6.3</i>
<i>Looks at picture in a book</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Has vocabulary for 4-6 words</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>10.5</i>
<i>Follows directions to put objects on chair etc</i>	<i>17.8</i>	<i>12.46</i>
<i>3-word sentence</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>16.8</i>
<i>Gives full name</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Counts objects to 3</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>25.2</i>

A gifted child behaves and responds to experiences differently from their age-mates. These characteristics allow for us to notice a gifted child since he/she would stand out as the “odd” one from the group when left to associate with age-mates. Gifted children tend to demonstrate high reasoning ability, creativity, curiosity, a large vocabulary, and an excellent memory. Gifted children can often master concepts with few repetitions. Gifted children may also be physically and emotionally sensitive, suffer from perfectionism, and may frequently question authority. Some have trouble relating to or communicating with their peers because of disparities in vocabulary size (especially in the early years), personality, interests and motivation. As children, they may prefer the company of older children or adults.

Joseph Renzulli, an American psychologist, developed the three-ring model of giftedness, which promoted a broadened conception of giftedness. Renzulli considers three factors important for the development of gifted behavior: Above average ability, creativity, and task commitment. Below is the three-ring model:

The three-ring model:



Graph no. 5: the three-ring model by Renzulli

Within the above average abilities Renzulli makes a difference between general abilities (like processing information, integrating experiences, and abstract thinking) and specific abilities (like the capacity to acquire knowledge, perform in an activity). By creativity Renzulli understands the fluency, flexibility, and originality of thought, an openness to experience, sensitivity to stimulations, and a willingness to take risks. Under task commitment he understands motivation turned into action (like perseverance, endurance, hard work, but also self-confidence, perceptiveness and a special fascination with a special subject). Renzulli argues that without task commitment high achievement is simply not possible. Only if characteristics from all three rings work together can high achievement or gifted behavior be witnessed.

Francoy Gagne’s Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) is a developmental theory that distinguishes giftedness from talent, offering explanation on how outstanding natural abilities (gifts) develop into specific expert skills (talents). According to DMGT theory, “one cannot become talented without first being gifted, or almost so”.

There are six components that can interact in countless and unique ways that fosters the process of moving from having natural abilities (giftedness) to systematically developed skills (Gagne, 2020). These components consist of: i) the *gift* (G), ii) *chance* (C), iii) *environmental catalyst* (EC), iv) *intrapersonal catalyst* (IC), v) *learning/practice* (LP) and vi) *the outcome of talent* (T) (Gagne, 2020). It is important to know that chance, intrapersonal catalyst, and environmental catalyst can facilitate but can also hinder the learning and training of becoming talented.

5.0 Conclusion

The tensions and dynamics of giftedness as a disability than a gift is a cross-cutting problem, it needs an interdisciplinary approach to address it. No one remains exempted from this problem. Solutions are sought from all social institutions. By social institutions we mean: i) the family ii) the Church or religion², iii) Education³, iv) Health⁴, v) socio-politic-economy⁵, v) sports and entertainment; and vi) Technology, ICT, the Media or the Multimedia, ICT, Management Information Systems (MIS). This is so because *The Happiness Index* measures life satisfaction, the feeling of happiness, and other happiness. domains: psychological well-being, health, time balance, community, social support, education, arts. and culture, environment, governance, material well-being, and work (Happiness Alliance, 2014c, Musikanski, 2017:4-31).

Because of these difficulties, the school experience is one to be endured rather than celebrated. It is estimated that 20% to 25% of gifted children have social and emotional

² Christian Church is an ecclesiological term referring to what different Christian denominations conceive of as being the true body of Christians or the original institution established by Jesus. A sleeping Church, or a Church which is ticking in the box for too long cannot solve any external or internal problems, the Church be a Church which is happening, and Church of proper action. Religion is usually defined as a social-cultural system of designated behaviors and practices, morals, beliefs, worldviews, texts, sanctified places, prophecies, ethics, or organizations, that generally.

³ Education is a social institution which carry out purposeful activity/activities directed at achieving certain aims, such as transmitting knowledge, or fostering skills and character traits. These aims may include the development of understanding, rationality, kindness, and honesty. Various researchers emphasize the role of critical thinking, in order to distinguish education from indoctrination. Some theorists require that education results in an improvement of the student while others prefer a value-neutral definition of the term. In a slightly different sense, education may also refer, not to the process, but to the product of this process: the mental states, and dispositions possessed by educated people. Education originated as the transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to the next. Today, educational goals increasingly encompass new ideas such as the liberation of learners, skills needed for modern society, empathy, and complex vocational skills. This institution encompasses the Kindergarten, the Primary School, the Secondary School, the High School, and the College or University. Many agree that education is a purposeful activity directed at achieving certain aims, especially the transmission of knowledge (Barry, 2022:12-21).

⁴ Health, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), is a social institution encompassing all Health Facilities, the Doctors, the Nurses, and All Allied Health Professionals. The Health deals with human growth and development. Health itself is defined as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity” (WHO, 2006). A variety of definitions have been used for different purposes over time. Health can be promoted by encouraging healthful activities, such as regular physical exercise, and adequate sleep (CDC, 2021), and by reducing or avoiding unhealthful activities or situations, such as smoking or excessive stress. Some factors affecting health are due to individual choices, such as whether to engage in a high-risk behavior, while others are due to structural causes, such as whether the society is arranged in a way that makes it easier or harder for people to get necessary healthcare services. Still, other factors are beyond both individual and group choices, such as genetic disorders.

⁵ Monarchy, or Presidencies, Parliaments, Congress, General Assembly, Cabinet of the Ministers, the Judiciary, and all the Political Parties, famously known as oppositions. The way Kingdoms, Principalities, States, United States, Republics, or United Republics, and the way they are organized politically, socially and economically.

difficulties, about twice as many as in the general population of students. Gifted students require support from home and from school.

Parents are a valuable source of information on both the positive and negative characteristics of their children. Teachers are often skeptical that parents overestimate their child's abilities; however, parents more often underestimate their child's abilities. Parents have a role to do in parenting gifted children. They are responsible in "creating and developing unlimited potential" (Jolly, *et al.* 2008:4), as well as "developing the child's successful intelligence" (Jolly, *et al.* 2008:12), and "raising the creative [gifted] child" (Jolly, *et al.*, 2008:258).

Research strongly supports the view that high teacher and parent expectations can positively influence the academic achievement of students (Steinberg, *et al.*, 2000). This is especially so for underachieving students. Like others, gifted students need to be motivated and taught in an appropriate manner suited to their needs so that they can reach their maximum potential. The doctrine of Imago Dei facilitates this motivation.

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