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# Gifted Students' Special Educational Programs in France: An Analysis of Students' Needs as Perceived by Headmasters — A Secondary Publication

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**Abstract:** Some French public middle schools offer gifted students the opportunity to pursue their education in general classes, while benefiting from specific facilities within the framework of a dedicated educational program. In this study, we sought to identify and analyze the needs of these students as perceived by the headmaster of each middle school involved. The results highlight two main student needs, common to all these programs (uneasiness and difficulties in peer relationships) as well as needs specifically mentioned by some headmasters (non-adaptive behavior).

**Keywords:** Learning difficulties; Students in difficulty; Education policies

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## 1. Introduction

When we talk about students with special educational needs (BEP), we most often think of students with disabilities or those experiencing serious difficulties at school. Rarely do we look at the SEN of students with high intellectual potential (HPI), undoubtedly because the needs of these "over-intelligent" children are not a priority for educational action.

In France, the psychometric approach is the one generally used to identify students with an HPI [1], and the Wechsler intelligence scale for children is the most frequently used [2,3]. With a threshold set at two standard deviations (fifteen points) from the mean, which is 100, these tests determine HPI for an intelligence quotient (IQ) value ≥ 130. This means that in 2019, nearly 78,000 schoolchildren in France will have an HPI.

Research and teachers' observations show that these students sometimes have a difficult relationship with school, with some failing to achieve academic success, experiencing difficulties with psychosocial integration [4] or adapting to the school environment [5]. This issue is also addressed in North American literature under the term

"underachievement" [6]. However, the percentage of these students experiencing difficulties in the institution is difficult to determine [7], and although the proportion of one-third is regularly put forward in French literature [8-10], caution is called for when it comes to this rate, for which scientific support is not assured [11], as the figures may vary depending on the author [7].

Parisot *et al.* [12] established a link between pupils with intellectual disabilities who have difficulties at school and poor social skills, behavioral problems, and high anxiety levels. Grégoire [13] highlighted asynchrony as a potential source of difficulties, a term he prefers to that of dyssynchrony developed by Terrassier [14], which he believed has a "pathological" connotation. For Grégoire [13], asynchrony, i.e. "the gap between the child's cognitive development and the development of his affectivity and motor skills" can take two distinct forms: an internal form (a gap between the child's intellectual development and his psychomotor and affective development) and a social form (a difference between a pupil with HPI and the other pupils in his age group).

## 1.1. Schooling for students with intellectual disabilities in France

In France, the report by Delaubier [8] was the first to be written by the Ministry of National Education (MEN) to take account of the BEPs of these pupils [7]. Subsequently, the number of official texts increased, with, for example, the Code de l'éducation (article L321-4) prescribing special arrangements: "Appropriate arrangements are made for the benefit of pupils who are intellectually precocious or show particular aptitudes, to enable them to develop their potential to the full." Or the note preparing for the start of the 2014 school year (Bulletin officiel de l'éducation nationale [BOEN] no. 2014-068 of May 20, 2014): "Intellectually precocious pupils (EIP) benefit from the necessary educational adjustments. In the case of pupils with special needs, a personalized program for educational success (PPRE) can be set up." In addition, the Ministry of Education provides documentary resources on the Eduscol website to support these pupils.

At present, some state secondary schools offer these pupils the opportunity to continue their education in a mixed class—with the other pupils in the school—while benefiting from special arrangements. In these cases, pupils with HPI have access to educational or pedagogical arrangements that are supposed to be conducive to their schooling, including accelerated learning (enabling them to follow the school curriculum in less time than other pupils), enrichment (offering additional activities related to a subject studied in class), individual support (tutoring by a referent adult), or specific workshops outside class time [15]. In their report, Dugruelle and Le Guillou [16] already mentioned a number of colleges involved in this kind of scheme, and their review of the experience provides useful information for understanding the way in which these dispositions are organized and run. However, empirical studies on the subject are rare [17], and these schemes remain relatively unknown. In addition, there are no official texts from the Ministry of Education setting out general provisions for these schemes, and this absence of rules gives schools a degree of autonomy when it comes to setting them up (pupils accepted, objectives pursued, etc.).

## 1.2. Educational systems: Definition and characterization

For Barrère [18], systems originally corresponded to "the material, technical, and organizational substrates of action, moving away from a conception that focused solely on the actors and their intentions." What's more, it reminds us that the school as a whole could be seen as a system that networks fundamentally different elements, as Foucault [19] emphasized when he defined systems and their role within the framework of global institutions. This conception of a normative, procedural, and generally coercive school can be compared with that of the school form proposed by Vincent [20]. Views have since evolved and are tending towards a reappraisal of the notion of the system, especially as applied to the world of schools, where it is now seen in a "more constructive

and open" way [21]. Peeter and Charlier [22] described devices as "open, adaptive, and intelligent environments." We have chosen to adopt the definition proposed by Tremblay [23], whose work focuses on devices designed for students with BEPs. He speaks of "a structure, operating in a given environment, whose objective is to meet the specific needs of a given population, using the resources allocated to it" [23]. Tremblay [24] explained that these schemes are characterized by their "flexibility," since they endure "beyond the initial mission, through a dual process of readjustment to the effects produced and constant remobilization to manage those effects." He also explained how the schemes, initially conceived as part of an "institutional differentiation," are tending, at least in intent, to become "pedagogical differentiation" schemes, thereby limiting the "streaming of pupils" [24].

Bouchard and Plante [25] suggested six dimensions in one environment, De Ketele and Gérard [26] proposed four components in a triple environment, while Roegiers [27] considered five elements and three reference frameworks. However, the notion of "needs" seems incontrovertible, as it is common to all these proposals; we have therefore chosen this criterion to analyze the different arrangements for pupils with intellectual disabilities and compare them with each other.

## 1.3. The two forms of perceived need and how they are expressed

Needs can be differentiated according to whether they are perceived by the representatives of the institution in their attempt to define an offer that meets these "supposed" needs or needs felt and (more or less) expressed by the users of the school, first and foremost the pupils. This differentiation between two forms of need refers back to the classic distinction between supply and demand, which are difficult to link. This link is particularly important, however, as we have moved from a system of school provision to which demand had to adapt to a system of provision that is supposed to meet expectations (in the sense of needs perceived and expressed by the users who make the request).

According to Bourgeois [28], the needs perceived and expressed by stakeholders are mental constructions articulated along three distinct but related poles. They can be stated as a problem, a dysfunction perceived in an actual situation ("current situation representation pole"), in the form of a desire, a wish for an expected situation ("expected situation representation pole") or, finally, as an envisaged solution, with a view to taking action ("action prospects representation pole") [28]. Following Bourgeois [28], Roegiers [27] defined stakeholder needs as the representation of the gap between an expected situation and a current situation. This author drew on the distinction highlighted earlier, namely that between the needs perceived and expressed by the institution and those expressed by users. The needs perceived by the institution are established by the managers of the establishment, the executives of the institution, or even external experts called upon for this purpose; they can be identified via different channels such as a malfunction, an audit, or a survey of indicators. In this article, we focus on the key role played by school management teams, and in particular the headmaster. Since the mid-1980s, secondary schools have enjoyed pedagogical and administrative autonomy, guaranteed by the powers conferred on their boards of governors (Decree of 30 August 1985, amended by the decrees of 9 and 13 September 2005). The headmaster occupies a central position on this board and is its appointed chairman, while at the same time retaining his or her role as representative of the State: in this dual capacity, "he or she initiates and conducts the educational and teaching policy of the school" (BOEN no. 3, January 2002). In this instance, BOEN no. 3 of 18 January 2007 calls on schools to carry out an annual internal evaluation, which must be submitted to the academic authorities in the form of a report on the projects pursued, the experiments carried out, and the objectives. As pilots of the schemes, headmasters are therefore in a position to express the needs of pupils as perceived by the institution, in the sense of dysfunctions in an actual situation, according to the first understanding of the term needs identified by Bourgeois [28]. It is this perception that interests us here,

in the sense that it guides the implementation of measures designed to respond to pupils' BEPs, including those of pupils with HPI in particular. Needs are to be distinguished from objectives defined as: Objectives are "all statements of intent that describe one or more results to be achieved" [25]. Objectives thus translate into action the needs identified during the self-evaluation of the systems. This proximity between the two concepts is still a source of confusion.

## 2. Issues and method

In this context, our question is as follows: what are the pupils' BEPs as perceived by the institution (i.e. the school heads)? Are these needs the same or do they vary from one scheme to another?

### 2.1. Participants

In the absence of an official list of state schools offering a dedicated scheme for pupils with intellectual disabilities in France, we searched the websites of schools for those that communicated specific provisions for these pupils. Our analysis of academic websites and searches using keywords such as "college" or "EIP" enabled us to identify nine public colleges with EIP provisions. After initial contact by email, seven headmasters (3 men and 4 women) agreed to take part in the study; their colleges are located in six regions of France. The schemes for pupils with intellectual disabilities in these seven colleges, which will be referred to as schemes A to G in the following to ensure their anonymity, vary in size: two schemes have fewer than 10 pupils (schemes B and E), three have between 10 and 50 pupils (schemes C, F, and G), and two have more than 50 pupils (schemes A and D). The age of the schemes varies, less than 2 years for scheme B, between 3 and 9 years for schemes A, E, and F, and more than 10 years for schemes C, D, and G. In addition, the initiative for setting up the schemes is taken by the headmaster in the case of two of the schemes (A and C), and is the result of consultation between the headmaster and the DSDEN (Direction des services départementaux de l'Éducation nationale) or the rectorat in the case of two others (D and F), and a decision by the DSDEN in the case of schemes B and E (we do not have the information for establishment G). Students with HPI are admitted after examination of their files. In all the schemes, a total IQ $\geq$ 130 combined with behavioral problems, lack of motivation at school, and social isolation are the admission criteria. The schemes also examine other criteria, such as students' malaise (A, B, C, D, E, F), significant academic difficulties (A, B, C, D), or permanent exclusion from another college (A, C, D, E, G). Pupils admitted to these schemes sometimes live outside the sector, in which case they benefit from an exemption from the school map. In the seven colleges, pupils with HPI are taught in heterogeneous classes and benefit from educational and/or pedagogical adjustments via the scheme. In five colleges (A, C, D, E, F), the specific adaptations are contractualized in a document such as a personalized program for educational success (PPRE). Finally, all the schools offer at least one meeting a year to each family of a pupil in the scheme, and these meetings are attended by the headmasters (six out of seven).

### 2.2. Materials and procedure

This study is part of a wider study on evaluating the quality of provision for pupils with intellectual disabilities. Using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, the aim was to compare the views of pupils, their families, and school teams (headmasters, senior education advisers, and teachers). Headmasters are the main local representatives of the institution, and their status gives them the dual role of spokesperson for the institution and for the school community. Each of them completed a 65-item questionnaire divided into five sections (presentation of the school, setting up the scheme, steering, working with families, pupil pathways, and personalized support). They also took part in individual semi-structured interviews lasting about an hour,

between June 2015 and February 2016. These discussions covered four areas: the origins of the scheme, how it is organized, and how it operates (for example, "What is/are the aim(s) of the scheme?" "What needs do you want to address in your pupils?" "Can you tell me in a few words what an EIP scheme in a college is? What specific things are done for EIPs?"), the perceived effects and finally the development of the scheme over time. The interviews were recorded anonymously with the prior consent of the participants.

### 2.3. Data analysis

We present here only the analyses and results relating to pupils' needs as perceived by headmasters, based on thematic content analysis of the interviews [29,30]. For each transcribed interview, we recorded the dysfunctions perceived in an actual situation [28]. This understanding of the notion of needs therefore covers a wider field than just pupils' difficulties and includes other elements, such as feelings of boredom.

To organize the needs identified, we used the analysis grid in the report "Les enfants et les adolescents à haut potential" [31] which is structured along two axes: content and status. These authors have sought to understand the life situations of children and adolescents with HPI by analyzing the testimonies of the young people themselves, their parents, their teacher(s), and their psychologist (where possible). The content axis is organized into five distinct fields: personal, learning, family, school, and social and cultural environment. These fields group together several "domains," themselves broken down into one or more "traits." Our data, which are limited to the school context, lead us to select three of these fields (personal, learning, and college) and our results point to a number of "traits." The French term collège refers to the term école used in the Belgian survey and corresponds to the level of education we are interested in, i.e. the third year of cycle 3 and cycle 4 of secondary education. Our results refer to four domains (affectivity and development in the personal field; approach and storytelling in the learning field). We considered two features of the initial grid as domains (relationship with peers and relationship with learning), which provide an additional level of data organization. The second axis, status, initially includes characteristics, resources, difficulties, and accommodations. Our study focuses only on needs, so our grid has only one status, and each trait is a need. The analysis of the verbatim reports and the positioning of the items in the grid were discussed and agreed upon, using an inter-judge method, between three researchers.

## 3. Results

**Table 1**, which lists all the needs identified in the headmasters' comments, shows that 15 needs were identified. The majority correspond to the "staff" field and the "college" field comes in second place; two needs are identified in the "learning" field.

### 3.1. Needs common to all schemes

Analysis of **Table 1** highlights two features present in all seven schemes (see black boxes): pupils' unease within the institution (field: staff; area: affectivity) and difficulties in social interaction (field: school; area: peer relations).

As far as the students' malaise is concerned, the wording used to express this varied (**Table 2**). We have chosen to use the generic term "pupil malaise" because it echoes the "well-being" to which educational research has devoted a great deal of attention in recent years as a legitimate objective for schools in general and for each school in particular, to the extent that several studies have attempted to evaluate the modalities of this "well-being" and its impact on pupils' schooling and personal development. Two headmasters used the expression "malaise," while others spoke of "suffering" (n = 2), "sadness" (n = 1), or "despondency" (n = 1). Headmasters

also noted a lack of serenity (F) or personal fulfillment (E) among these pupils with HPI. Two headmasters (B and C) set out their objectives in response to the question on needs (confusion mentioned earlier): to "preserve" the pupils (B) or to aim for their well-being at the college (C). It should be noted that the headmaster of scheme C mentioned the heightened emotional state of these pupils (which relates to the area of affectivity), describing them as "very sensitive, very emotional, and who keep it all in, they are like sponges" and stressing the need for an airlock and the "need at some point to be able to pour it all out."

Headmasters also described difficulties in the social interactions of pupils with HPI (**Table 3**). Four referred to the social isolation experienced by these pupils, three mentioned difficulties in their relationships, and one mentioned difficulties in communicating with peers.

## 3.2. Needs specific to certain systems

We note that five of the seven schemes (A, B, C, D, and E) share three common features (**Table 1**) in addition to the two features shared by all seven schemes: behavior not adapted to lower secondary school (field: personal; area: affectivity), difficulties (or even disorders) in graphomotor skills (field: personal; area: development), and disengagement from school (field: lower secondary school; area: relationship to learning).

With regard to behavior not adapted to the college, three headmasters spoke of behavioral problems: "[pupils] who have serious behavioral problems in addition to precociousness" (A); "we have behavioral problems" (C); "behavioral problems are not a concern" (D). One headmaster mentioned behavioral problems of pupils prior to their arrival at the college: "behavioral problems that are actually a cause for concern in their local school or college" (B); another reiterated pupils' outbursts: "pupils who can throw tantrums, hit the wall" (E). In addition, the headmaster of scheme C explained that it can be difficult for some pupils with HPI to stay in class as long as others, a difficulty that leads to regular exclusions.

We also noted graphomotor difficulties among the pupils in these five schemes. Two headmasters referred to a disorder, one citing dyspraxia (A), the other dysgraphia (D). The other three headmasters, without naming a particular disorder, nevertheless mentioned similar difficulties: "handwriting that causes problems" (B), "difficulties in reading and writing" (C), and "difficulties in reading and writing" (D). "It is difficult to take notes in class" (C), or "the transition to writing is also very, very complicated" (E).

Lastly, school dropout was mentioned by the five headmasters, three of whom spoke of school dropout situations for certain pupils at HPI: "There are quite a few precocious children who arrive at college having dropped out of school" (C); "these children are in great distress in the education system, some have dropped out of the system" (D). Three headmasters explained their difficult relationship with the college: "coming to school is like something, a chore" (A), "the concern was to reconcile these children with the institution but also with themselves" (D), "they feel different, they do not want to come" (E). The lack of interest in learning was also highlighted by headmaster A, who described the pupils as "resistant to learning." In addition, two of them spoke of school phobia: "So these are rather complex profiles, pupils with school phobia, and so our aim in our school is really to make them want to come to school" (C); "some have dropped out of the system, developed school phobia, so there's a break" (D).

The two remaining establishments (F and G) do not have the same profile. In school F, we were able to identify one case of school phobia and one case of demobilization from school. However, the one-off nature of these two features means that they cannot be generalized. It is true that the pupils at school G have graphomotor difficulties and show a lack of motivation at school, but the headmaster interviewed did not mention any inappropriate behavior. As for school F, it is the only one of the seven schools concerned in which the pupils suffer from stress and/or anxiety.

**Table 1.** The needs of pupils with HPI as perceived by school heads

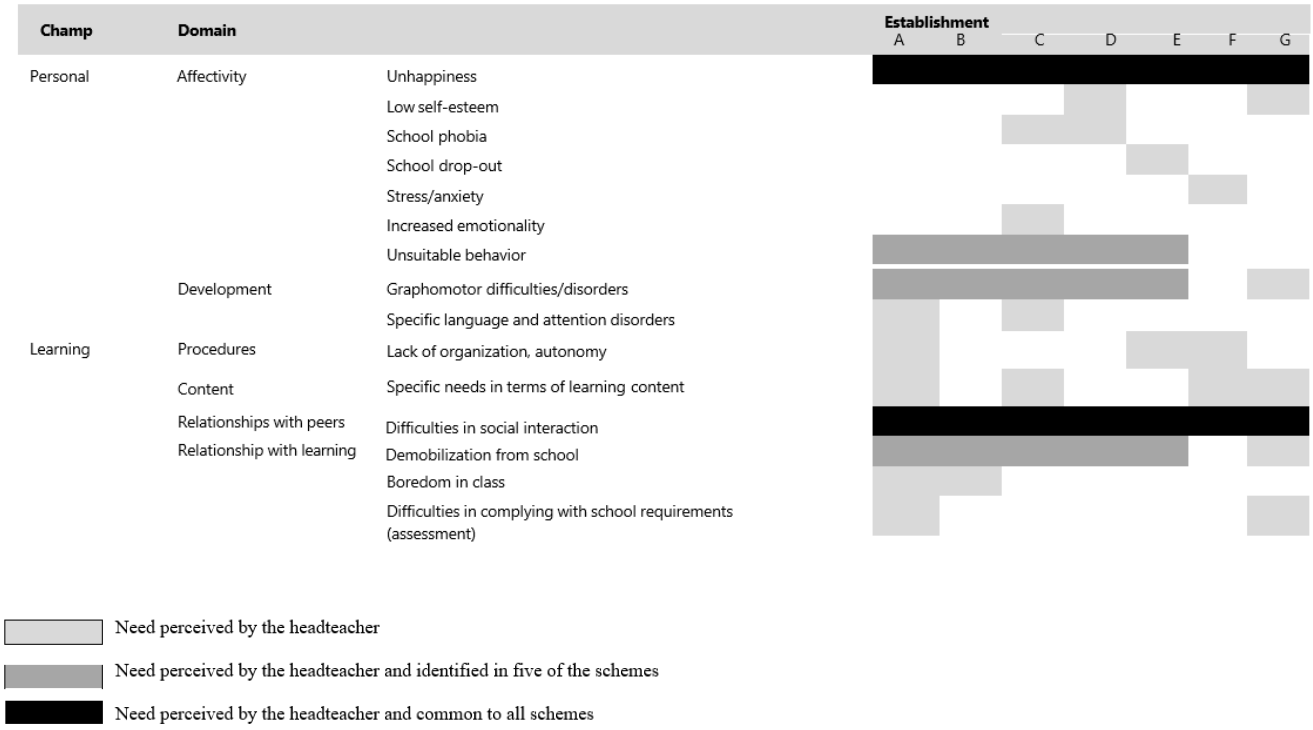


**Table 2.** Examples of extracts from headmaster interviews referring to the ill-being of pupils at HPI

| | **Formulations** | **Extracts from interviews** | **Establishments** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Expression of malaise | Unhappiness | There is a lot of unease. | D |
| | | [The nurse] sees them arrive with their problems. | G |
| | Suffering | Children who were sometimes in total pain in their personal and family lives, and in their learning at the school. | A |
| | | These children are suffering in the education system. | D |
| | Sadness | Others, who were constantly being noticed for their behavior, their lack of appetite for learning and, at times, their sadness. | A |
| | Despair | Some of them are in such a state of despair, both psychologically and academically. | D |
| Expression of lacks | Lack of serenity | Children [...] for whom things do not always run smoothly at school. | F |
| | Lack of personal fulfillment | Who do not thrive at school. | E |
| Objectives for the system | Protecting students | We are obliged to put them here to preserve them or because in their context, they cannot be put there like that. | B |
| | Wellbeing | The main objective is for these young people to do well. To do well and use their potential to do well [...], so that [these students] do well in our system. | C |

**Table 3.** Examples of extracts from headmaster interviews referring to difficulties in the social interactions of pupils with HPI

| Formulations | Extracts from interviews | Establishments |
|---|---|---|
| Relationship difficulties | Students who arrive at college with difficulties relating to others. | C |
| | They often have problems with interpersonal relationships. | D |
| | This is a pupil who has difficulty relating to others and positioning himself in relation to his colleagues. | G |
| Communication difficulties | Especially students who have difficulty communicating with others. | E |
| Social isolation | There were no friends, there was isolation. | A |
| | They face enormous difficulties integrating. | B |
| | A little, even a lot of desocialization. | E |
| | The parents [...] tell us it's not going well at all, he doesn't have any friends. | F |

## 4. Discussion

While our results show that the BEPs of students as perceived by the institution vary from one scheme to another, they do highlight certain needs that are common to all schemes.

Analysis of the interviews with headmasters highlights the malaise of these pupils as a need perceived by the institution. Both the weight of the words used—suffering, malaise, sadness—and the adjectives used—total and great—suggest a level of malaise perceived as significant. In 2002, Delaubier was already highlighting the suffering in which some pupils with HPI might find themselves. A similar observation in 2019, seventeen years later, raises questions. Back in 2006, Lautrey and Vrignaud pointed out that French schools had to offer special arrangements in response to the special needs of these pupils, like other countries with a proactive policy in this area. Various regulations have followed from the Delaubier report, establishing an institutional framework for possible arrangements. With regard to the training of school teams, circular no. 2009-168 of November 12, 2009, set up an academic referent, i.e. a national education professional responsible for promoting and coordinating high-potential training at the academic level. In 2013, the Ministry of Education published a document on Eduscol entitled "Scolariser les élèves intellectuellement précoces" (Schooling Intellectually Precocious Pupils), which sets out the various institutional levers and possible pedagogical adaptations. Six years later, at a time when MEN is publishing a new support tool for school teams, the "vadémécum Scolariser un élève à haut potential" [15], these results open up a debate: what contextual factors could explain the persistence of the "suffering" of some of these pupils at school, despite increased information for staff? What are the obstacles in the field? It would be interesting to analyze the obstacles to implementing the various recommendations put forward at the national level and to transferring the new skills acquired during training to the classroom. Back in 2002, Delaubier pointed out the challenge to be met in terms of the deployment, at the school level, of facilities adapted to the specific needs of these pupils: "The problem we face is not that of creating new structures, but rather that of implementing existing provisions for the benefit of these rather special children" [8]. The results of our study are thus a reminder of the conditions for the effectiveness of a tool such as a vade mecum, a little manual "that you keep close to you" (literally, vade mecum: "come with me") and which functions as a means of communication and which functions as a user manual, a guide for staff in charge of pupils with intellectual disabilities. The usefulness of the vade mecum depends on its appropriation by those involved, which may require high-quality local training.

A second important point concerns the difficulties that some of these pupils with intellectual disabilities have in relating to their peers. Their socio-affective development has been the subject of debate in the literature, with two opposing points of view: for some, these pupils "are as well adapted, if not better adapted, than their peers in the general population," while for others, they "experience more difficulties in socio-affective adaptation than their peers in the general population" [32]. Our results tend to show that pupils benefiting from these schemes, because of their chaotic background prior to joining the scheme, present more socio-affective difficulties. Brasseur and Cuche [33] suggested two explanations for the greater relational difficulties experienced by people with intellectual disabilities: asynchrony in its social form (see introduction) and the feeling of being different from others, which may lead some of them to believe that they will be excluded. This "belief," echoing the "stigma of high potential," is thought to be the source of stress with negative impacts on social relationships. Cuche *et al.* [34] reviewed various studies showing the impact of social relationships between peers on the social, emotional, and cognitive development of children and adolescents of all ages. Moreover, while they do not show any link between peer relationships and the academic engagement of pupils with intellectual disabilities, they do suggest that the impact of these relationships on the well-being of these young people should not be overlooked. In this sense, the poor quality of peer relationships highlighted by the headteachers we met can be linked to the malaise mentioned and represent a new element of understanding.

In addition to these two needs as perceived by the heads of schools, our study highlighted a number of features that were pointed out on an ad hoc basis in certain systems (for example, non-adapted behavior, difficulties, or even disorders in graphomotor skills, stress and/or anxiety). These needs resonate with some of the cognitive, socio-affective, and behavioral characteristics of pupils with intellectual disabilities highlighted in the literature [35]. It should be noted that these different needs do not apply to all the systems and that it is not possible to consider them as unifying elements of their operation. Also, just as there is no population of children with intellectual disabilities whose psychopathological characteristics ("cognitive, psychological, learning and attention disorders, etc.") can be generalized [36], we cannot speak of a "typical" system for pupils with intellectual disabilities, but rather of a typology of possible systems.

In view of the small number of systems taken into account, a further study of a larger sample of systems is required and would probably enable a more detailed classification of these systems to be proposed. In addition, it would seem necessary to reinforce this understanding of the provision for pupils with intellectual disabilities with an analysis of the resources deployed to meet the various needs identified. For example, it would be particularly interesting to know what strategies are used to deal with the behavioral problems of pupils in schools A to E, a difficulty regularly described in French literature [8,12,37-39]. In this case, the inclusion of pupils with behavioral problems is a concern of the French Ministry of Education, which published a report on the subject in 2018. It would therefore seem appropriate to investigate the means used in these facilities to meet this need. In addition, particular attention could be paid to the support provided to school teams, who have to identify pupils' difficulties and manage moments of tension in a variety of contexts (in the classroom, in the school corridors, in the canteen, or in the playground). Based on the various recommendations in the IGAS, IGEN, and IGAENR report [40], we can imagine a wide range of possible strategies for developing appropriate professional actions among the staff concerned: continuing education, access to an 'expert' resource center on the issue, or working in partnership with the medical and/or medico-social sector.

Finally, this study, which is above all exploratory, is based exclusively on the point of view as felt and expressed by headmasters, whom we have said are in the front line as local leaders, pilots of the school's pedagogical project, and managers of the smooth running of the public education service. It has the limitation of being uni-vocal, i.e. based on a single category of stakeholder. Our methodological approach was therefore

based on the information provided by this single source, the headmasters, reflecting their personal feelings. In order to limit this methodological bias, we could, in the future, analyze documents relating to these schemes (school projects, annual reports) and interview other national education managers in charge of this issue, at the academic level for example. On the other hand, in France, the idea of a link between high potential and academic failure is widely shared by the public [41], a stereotype that is relayed in the media even though several scientists have shown it to be inaccurate [42]. With regard to studies highlighting academic and/or socio-emotional difficulties for people with HPI, this author mentions recruitment bias with samples composed solely of people who consult, since academic problems are a major reason for psychological consultation in adolescence. Existing data therefore do not allow us to generalize [43]. We have also noted an increase in the number of official texts from the Ministry of Education inviting consideration of the potential difficulties of pupils with intellectual disabilities. In such a context, we need to ask ourselves: to what extent do the headteachers interviewed subscribe to this unfavorable representation of high potential? Can this influence their perceptions and, beyond that, color the system and its actions within the school they manage? In this sense, it seems essential to interview pupils and their parents to gather their perceptions of their needs and expectations. Confronting the perceptions of needs from several points of view, that of the representatives of the institution, that of the pupils, and that of their parents (applicants) has an undeniable heuristic significance.

## 5. Conclusion

In this study, we wanted to find out more about the provision for secondary school pupils with HPI by looking at the needs of the pupils as perceived by the institution.

Two points are worth noting. Firstly, the generic expression "provision for pupils with intellectual disabilities" seems to cover a wide range of realities, and these arrangements, while sharing common features, do not all seek to meet the same needs of pupils. Another debate has also arisen concerning these arrangements for pupils with special needs: only a few pupils, sometimes living far from the college (in the event of an exemption from the school map), have access to these specific arrangements. This raises a number of questions: what about other pupils with intellectual disabilities who have similar needs but who do not benefit from such arrangements? In this context, it is essential to continue working on these arrangements, analyzing the resources deployed and considering whether they are transferable to all French colleges. In this sense, we could respond to one of the recommendations made in the Delaubier report [8]: "in the long term, after evaluation of the experiments carried out, encourage each school to include in its project the positive consideration of all differences and, among other things, to ensure the full development of intellectually precocious pupils."

## Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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