

ECHA NEWS

EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR HIGH ABILITY

AUTUMN 2018

President's Report

Dear ECHA Members,

ECHA celebrated its 30th birthday this year. We have established an **archive of all past ECHA Conferences**¹. In addition, we made a complete electronic **archive of all past ECHA News issues**² which is accessible after your login as an ECHA member. If you forgot your username and password please contact our webmaster at webmaster@echa.info.

We are after a successful International ECHA Conference as our 16th conference from ECHA's founding conference in Zürich in 1988. The central topic of the Dublin meeting was "Working with Gifted Students in the 21st Century", which allowed to show the richness of theory and practical applications in gifted education and talent support. Participants represented 50 countries altogether spanning the scope and significance of the conference much beyond Europe. This wide representation of countries and cultures also made the conference a rich opportunity for networking. **ECHA members re-elected Ulrike Kempter (AT) and Victor Mueller-Oppliger (CH), as well as newly elected Mariska Poelman (NL) as members of the ECHA General Committee.**

At the Dublin conference we had a **meeting of ECHA National Correspondents**, which will become an annual meeting at the upcoming International/Thematic ECHA Conferences. Our next ECHA Conference will be the **1st Thematic ECHA Conference centred on creativity**, which will be held in **Dubrovnik, Croatia between 16 and 18 October 2019**. The conference will be organized by the Faculty of Education of



foto by Csilla Fuszek.

the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek in Croatia, and will feature 3 excellent keynote speakers, a Youth Summit, plenty of discussion time in parallel and poster sessions and a lucrative social programme. Abstract submission will be possible until 30th April 2018³. More info can be received from Zeljko Racki at zracki@fozoos.hr. The next **International ECHA Conference will be in Porto, Portugal between 9 and 12 September 2020**. The conference organization is already on track: the first meeting on the organization of the Porto conference will be held on 19th October 2018. **The General Committee extended the deadline for the applications to our 2nd Thematic ECHA Conference in 2021 until 15th November**. Please find the call as a top news item at the ECHA's website and address all your questions to our vice-president, Albert Ziegler at albert.ziegler@fau.de.

The General Assembly of ECHA approved the report of the ECHA Education Board (Christian Fischer, chair, Lianne Hoogeveen, Ulrike Kempter, Victor Müller-Oppliger and Szilvia Péter Szarka, members) **on the guidelines and application procedure for the ECHA qualification of university-**

based training programmes leading to a certificate of advanced studies, diploma of advanced studies or a master degree in gifted education. You may read these guidelines and details of the ECHA-training qualification procedure at the ECHA website⁵. Since ECHA's name and logo are trademarks, **after September 2019 no ECHA training can be started without previous qualification by the ECHA Education Board**. The ECHA-training programme also drew interest already from many European countries, where an ECHA training has not been established yet. Please address all your inquiries to the ECHA Education Board at training@echa.info.

The European Talent Support Network had its first general assembly at the Dublin ECHA Conference. The Network is about to establish its own organization as a European NGO and runs several joint programmes, such as an Erasmus+ project

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developing an e-platform on teacher training in gifted education. You can see the 300+ participating organizations of the Network here: <http://etsn.eu/map-of-etsn>.

The applications to join as Talent Points became continuous and the application for Talent Centres will be re-opened soon with a deadline of November 15th.

Both calls and application forms can be reached and filled out at the Network's website: <http://etsn.eu>. In case of any further inquiries, please send an email to the Coordinator of the Network, Csilla Fuszek at fuszekcs@gmail.com. **The ECHA general assembly re-elected Lianne Hoogeveen and Margaret Sutherland as chair and member of the Talent Centre Qualification Committee, respectively, and elected Anne Vohrmann (Münster, Germany) as a new member of the committee. The Dublin Conference hosted and very generously sponsored a successful 3rd Youth Summit of the Youth Platform of the European Talent Support Network.** Three talented young people can be nominated by each European Talent Centre or Talent Point of the Network (including Associated Centres and Points) as Youth Platform members. Not all organizations have accomplished this nomination yet, so there is ample room for development. **Please address your inquiries to the representative of the Platform: Armin Fabian at arminfabian@yahoo.com.** As a growing sign of networking activity the number of ECHA's Facebook group⁶ members increased from 1700 to 2200 during the six months passed from the previous ECHA News.

I wish all ECHA members a great continuation of our 30-year tradition of high quality research and even broader talent-related cooperation across Europe! ECHA-cha!

Peter Csermely, President of ECHA

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¹ <http://echa.info/echa-conferences>

² <http://echa.info/newsletter/94-old-issues-of-echa-news>

³ <http://echathematic2019.foozohr.hr>

⁴ <http://echa.info/237-call-to-organise-the-2nd-the-matic-echa-conference>

⁵ <http://echa.info/echa-training>

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ECHAGroup/>

Editorial

ANNETTE HEINBOKEL, GERMANY

Another successful ECHA conference ended in Dublin. It's encouraging to watch how more and more countries, school districts, schools and individual teachers put into practice what researchers and practitioners researched and developed over the decades. There are differences, of course, depending on the size of the country or the school, what resources are available, school policies and the needs of the individual gifted child. Gifted children can be extremely different in their abilities and interests, from the mildly to the profoundly gifted. In each case something else is needed so that they can develop all their gifts.

This year we have two reports on the conference, one by Csilla Fuszek, a long term active member of ECHA, and by Saskia van Bruinessen, who had just finished her ECHA diploma and is fairly new to the field. It is always refreshing to read what newcomers find interesting.

I'm really pleased that Dorothy Sisk contributed an article on 'Spiritual Intelligence'. It is something she has been interested in for many years and spoken about at several world conferences. With the help of parents and teachers, gifted children can enhance their own spiritual intelligence. Maybe this should not only be taught to gifted children, but to all children. However, gifted children will perhaps profit more.

I have known Dorothy Sisk since the 2nd world conference in San Francisco in

1977, and I have always been impressed by her knowledge on giftedness and her positive attitude towards these children. Maybe I should have asked her earlier for a contribution to ECHA News,

Lannie Kanevski and Lynn Dare did a survey of acceleration practices in Canada. Although it is one state, policies in the provinces can differ considerably. There are 19 different forms of acceleration. Even when one form is permitted, it does not mean that it is practised at all the schools in that state.

This reminds me of my research in Germany into grade skipping in the early 90s. Although it's a much smaller country, it is a federal state and rules concerning grade skipping could vary considerably. School years that were allowed to be skipped in one state were forbidden in others. The persons who decided on skipping could be the teachers teaching the child, the head of the school or someone at the local education authority. At that time those in power quite often refused a request by the parents for skipping because they had the notion that acceleration was no good. Sometimes parents even moved from one state to the next because conditions for their child were better across the border.

What I found encouraging: with very few exceptions the experts on gifted education present in Dublin agreed that acceleration is the most of effective form of intervention for gifted children. One of them even suggested that acceleration should be thought of first, enrichment afterwards if it was not enough. That is something I don't agree with at all.

Annette Heinbokel, editor

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Working with Gifted Students in the 21st Century

Report on the ECHA conference in Dublin, Ireland from 8th August to 11th August 2018



Lunch break, foto by Annette Heinbokel

BALÁZS HORNYÁK, HUNGARY
CSILLA FUSZEK, HUNGARY

The European Council for High Ability (ECHA) held its 16th biennial conference in Dublin this year. Well-known and recognized talent experts and professionals gathered from 42 different countries to discuss the topic of talent development in the 21st century.

Unlike previous practices the venue of the conference was at Croke Park in the stadium of GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) this year. The unusual location of the venue was symbolic, reminding the visitors of significant events in Irish history. The home of the Gaelic Games, Croke Park Stadium is the third largest stadium in Europe which has hosted many special events such as the Special Olympics in 2003 or the 50th International Eucharistic Congress in 2012. The Organization Committee led by Dr. Colm O'Reilly, director of the Centre for

Talented Youth (CTYI) at DCU (Dublin City University) and the Scientific Committee chaired by Prof. Albert Ziegler were responsible for the preparation of ECHA 2018.

The conference opened with a keynote from Professor François Gagné, followed by a reception in Croke Park's Museum, where guests had a chance to experience Ireland's national sports and culture. The Canadian professor, who has become a world-famous talent expert with his Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT), started his speech with a brief theoretical summary, then went on speaking about the results of his studies and practical aspects of talent development.

Following Gagné's opening keynote six renowned professionals held keynote presentations during the four days of ECHA conference. Prof. Heidrun Stöger, one of the most well-known professionals in

European talent research, Prof. Jonathan Plucker, American researcher of creativity and education policy from Johns Hopkins University and Prof. Tracy L. Cross, an internationally renowned expert of social and emotional development of talents. David Cuartielles lectured about how technology can help gifted education, while Prof. Anne Looney explained how universities can support talent development. Prof. Karine Verschueren from KU Leuven spoke about classroom social relationships as contexts for child and adolescent development.

In addition to the keynotes, ECHA 2018 featured 20 workshops, 14 symposia and 130 parallel sessions. Workshops, symposia

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and parallel sessions focused on European and non-European talent development methods. The conference provided a great deal of opportunity for professionals in talent development to present best practices and share the results of their studies. Thirty poster presentations were presented at Croke Park Conference Centre.

The operation of the European Talent Support Network (ETSN) was presented in the framework of a symposium for the first time¹. It was a pleasure for the presenters having a large number of conference delegates in the audience. The leader of the section was Prof. Albert Ziegler. The participants had the opportunity to get an overall picture of the history and operation of ETSN². The presentations provided necessary and sufficient information on how to join the network and how to establish a European Talent Centre.

During the ECHA conference ETSN held its first General Assembly, with representatives of the European Talent Centres and several European Talent Points. So far Prof. Albert Ziegler has reported on ETSN's achievements and ongoing joint projects. Before the conference ETSN sent its second international newsletter³.

Parallel to the official conference programme, CTY Ireland also hosted the second Summit of the Youth Platform of ETSN. The Summit gathered 45 delegates from 10 different countries and gave the attendees a chance to discuss gifted education across Europe. The members of the platform continued their work in a workshop which was documented by Ádám Pálvölgyi, member of the YouTube Channel Project. The delegates of the

summit had the chance to attend the opening and closing ceremony of ECHA conference as well.

Members of the European Council for High Ability usually hold their General Assembly at biennial ECHA conferences. This year's main topics included the voting for 3 members of the Qualification Committee (see the president's report), the adoption of the organizational and operational rules of the European Talent Support Network, the adoption of the budget of the previous year, and acceptance of the rules of applying to the qualification of an ECHA Training.

In relation to the conference and its activities more information is available on the official website of the conference⁴. In the history of ECHA conferences, this was the first time a mobile application was made for the participants making it easier to be informed about the programme and logistics. Guests were invited to attend cultural events in the Irish Emigration Museum (EPIC) and the Gala Dinner at Dublin City University.

In summary, delegates were able to attend a very successful conference. The organizers succeeded in creating an interesting and varied programme for the professionals working in the field of gifted education. Undoubtedly, the importance of the conference lies in the fact that a great deal of opportunity was given to present international good practices.

The following International ECHA Conference will be held in Porto in 2020. More information is available in relation to the following conference on the official

website of ECHA⁵. In order to provide more opportunities for networking and learning from each other ECHA will organize a Thematic Conference for the first time in Dubrovnik in Croatia in 2019 (see president's report).

Balázs Hornyák is a Hungarian flutist, music educator and journalist. He started to work in the field of talent development ten years ago as a mentor of gifted students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. As a music educator he found it challenging to teach those with musical talent giving them assistance to start a career in music. Currently, he works for the European Talent Centre Budapest as a talent expert. He lectures at national and international conferences on a regular basis and publishes best practices for talent professionals.

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Csilla Fuszek is the founding director of the European Talent Centre Budapest. Since 2009 she has been working with the Association of Hungarian Talent Support Organisations on nationwide talent support projects focusing on creating a Nationwide Talent Support Network. She was elected as the Secretary of the ECHA Qualification Committee and was elected as the coordinator of the European Talent Support Network.

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¹ <https://talentcentrebudapest.eu/news-events/etsn-symposium-echa-conference>

² <http://etsn.eu/>

³ <http://etsn.eu/talentweb-newsletter-issue-2/>

⁴ <https://echa2018.info/>

⁵ <http://www.echa.info/205-17th-international-echa-conference-porto-portugal-9-12-september-2020>

The most common experience of being a gifted student in school is waiting.

Tracy L. Cross, ECHA Conference Dublin, 2018



Irish dancing, foto by Annette Heinbokel

SASKIA VAN BRUINESSEN,
THE NETHERLANDS

Knowledge makes borders disappear. It is something that we should cherish. Knowledge connects each other and international networks are essential. This is the message from the delegation from Saudi Arabia. As a participant of the ECHA conference in Dublin I soaked up plenty of knowledge and met very inspiring people from around the globe.

“The most common experience of being a gifted student in school is waiting” and “school is a social enterprise, where on a good day some academic learning takes place” Tracy Cross said in his keynote. A teacher can make all the difference. Teachers from around the world that had come to Dublin and were given enough food for thought, could connect with each other with knowledge about giftedness and could make that difference. Like a teacher of a girl’s school in Singapore said during the conference break: “I am happy when I can plant a seed in some young student’s mind that flourishes when she grows up. I can then proudly say that I planted that seed.”

Harmony

Inspiring teachers are so important for gifted students. But also, if we follow the thoughts of speaker Ngarmmars Kasemset from Thailand, a gifted child should be happy. Happiness can be obtained when the child is in harmony with his or her surroundings. And if we move on to speaker Maggy Brown from Auckland the environment that an infant has in the first years of life plays a key role: dear parents and preschool teachers, do avoid the cumulative relational trauma.

Project based approach

Another environment that we mustn’t forget is that of the school. Inspiring speaker Nancy Hertzog from Washington showed pictures of Italian schools where studios instead of old fashioned classes inspire the youngsters to explore. She is a big fan of project based learning and lets her participants have a hands-on experience during the conference.

Swing

There were many more speakers, it was very overwhelming for someone who visited the conference for the first time. The Irish dancers during the opening and the Irish music during the gala gave the conference a nice swing. Sadly not many speakers used inspiring work forms in their

(keynote) sessions. PowerPoint is not very 21st century.

Surprise

If you are a speaker at the next ECHA-conference I challenge you to surprise us. And if you are in the organizing committee please invite gifted children to join the conference and let them tell us of their thoughts, experiences and ideas. They themselves and not only research about them are essential for a deeper understanding.

Saskia van Bruinessen is a Dutch mother of two gifted children and, during the conference, a student of the Professional Educational Programme for Specialist in Gifted Education in Nijmegen. She presented the results of her research during the conference and received her certificate from programme director Lianne Hoogeveen. The conference inspired Saskia and she now uses much of the obtained knowledge in after school peer groups and home-schooling her son. Her aim is to be that inspiring teacher gifted kids deserve.

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Spiritual Intelligence: A Theory for Developing Higher Consciousness

DOROTHY A. SISK, USA

We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark. The real tragedy is when men are afraid of the light.

Plato

Spiritual intelligence is more and more recognized as a viable intelligence, and this recognition is vigorously supported in business. Leaders in business know that employees with a lack of meaning in life need to find a purpose to enable them to productively engage at work (Scharmer, 2009). Viktor Frankl (1985) in *Man's Search for Meaning* said the search for meaning is the primary motivation in life, and when this deep need for meaning goes unmet, life can feel shallow or empty. E. Paul Torrance and I saw this need for meaning in life as a vital part of what we called spiritual intelligence. To establish a foundation for the theory and concept of spiritual intelligence we explored psychology, science, the ancient wisdom and Eastern mysticism, the wisdom and traditions of Native American and indigenous people.

Exploring Psychology to Establish a Foundation for Spiritual Intelligence

Paul Torrance and I examined theories and the work of psychologists Carl Jung (1969), Kazimierz Dabrowski (1967), Carl Rogers (1980), and Abraham Maslow (1968). Several concepts emerged from this examination. Dabrowski (1967) said Level V individuals live a life in service to humanity, according to the highest universal principle of love and compassion. This concept represents what Sisk and Torrance (2001) identified as core behaviors of spiritual intelligence. These behaviors are reflected in the qualities of the Person of Tomorrow as described by Rogers (1980) depicted in Table 1.

People with spiritual intelligence are open to a multi-sensory way of knowing and they are able to use the core capacities of meditation, intention and visualization as proposed by Carl Jung (1969).

Exploring Science to Establish a Foundation for Spiritual Intelligence

We examined a number of scientists including geologist Greg Braden (1997); physicists Fritjof Capra (1991) and Niels Bohr (1999); and brain researchers Rodolfo Llinas and Ribary Urst (1993), Michael Persinger (1996), and Vilayanur Ramachandran (1998). These scientists were engaged in asking the important questions of *Why nature is the way it is?* and *Where did the cosmos come from?* Their work represents the classical role of science, the search for truth, and helped to build a scientific foundation for spiritual intelligence.

Table 1: Qualities of the Person of Tomorrow

QUALITIES OF THE PERSON OF TOMORROW	
1.	Openness (open to new experience and ways of seeing and being).
2.	Desire for authenticity (value of open communication)
3.	Skepticism regarding science and technology (distrust of science used to conquer nature and people; sees science used to enhance self-awareness)
4.	Desire for wholeness of life, body, mind and spirit
5.	Wish for intimacy, new forms of communication and closeness
6.	Process person (aware that life is change, welcomes risk-taking and the change process)
7.	Caring (eager to help, nonjudgmental, caring)
8.	Symbiotic attitude toward nature (ecologically minded, feels alliance with nature)
9.	Anti-institutional (antipathy for highly structured, bureaucratic institutions)
10.	Authority within (trusts own experiences and moral judgments)
11.	Unimportance of material things (money and material status symbols are not the main goal)
12.	Yearning for the spiritual (wish to find meaning and purpose in life that is greater than the individual) Rogers (1980)

From the examination of scientists in Physics (Capra, 1991; Bohr, 1999), and in Geology (Braden, 1997) a concept of a conscious universe in which we interact as a part of a continuous connected process of unity emerged. The brain research of Michael Persinger (1996), Rodolfo Llinas and Ribary Urst (1993), and Vilayanur Ramachandran (Ramachandran, 1998) suggested there may be an area of the brain, the temporal lobe that can be considered a brain state of spiritual intelligence.

Exploring Ancient Wisdom and Eastern Mysticism and the wisdom and traditions of Native American and indigenous people to establish a Foundation for Spiritual Intelligence

Ancient Wisdom and Eastern Mysticism, and the wisdom and traditions of Native American and indigenous people were examined, all sharing a mystical experience of reality. Native American people reach their intuitive thought through visions to gain wisdom, and they encourage ecological awareness and preservation by spending time alone in nature. They emphasize living by example similar to traditions in Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen and Confucianism. These traditions had many differences in specific details, but one important common idea emerged for a concept of spiritual intelligence, the concern for unity and the connectedness of all things and events. These common

Table 2: Likely Traits and Ways to Strengthen for Learning

LIKELY TRAITS	WAYS TO STRENGTHEN FOR LEARNING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses inner knowing • Seeks to understand self • Uses metaphor and parables to communicate • Uses intuition • Sensitive to social problems • Sensitive to their purpose in life • Concerned about inequity and injustice • Enjoys big questions • Sense of Gestalt (the big picture) • Wants to make a difference • Capacity to care • Curious about how the world works / functions • Values love, compassion, concern for others • Close to nature • Uses visualization and mental imaging • Reflective, self-observing and self-aware • Seeks balance • Concerned about right conduct • Seeks to understand self • Feels connected with others, the earth, and the universe • Wants to make a difference • Peacemaker • Concerned with human suffering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide time for reflective thinking • Use journal writing • Study lives/works of Spiritual Pathfinders • Use Problem solving • Conduct service learning projects • Use personal growth activities • Use problem-based learning on real problems • Provide time for open-ended discussion • Use mapping to integrate studies/ themes • Develop personal growth activities • Service learning projects • Integrate Science/Social Science • Use affirmations/think-about-thinking • Employ eco-environmental approach • Read stories and myths • Use role playing/sociodrama • Discussion of goal setting activities • Process discussions • Trust intuition and inner voice • Stress unity in studies • Use What, So What, Now What model • Use Negotiation–Conflict Sessions • Study lives of eminent people

elements are similar to the fundamental features of the world-view of a conscious universe that emerged from Science. After exploring Psychology, Science, Ancient Wisdom and traditions of Eastern Mysticism, the wisdom of Native American traditions, and indigenous people, the following definition of Spiritual Intelligence was proposed:

Spiritual Intelligence is the capacity to use a multi-sensory approach including intuition, meditation, and visualization to tap inner knowledge to solve problems of a global nature.

Defining spiritual intelligence as the ability to access inner knowledge, the likely traits and ways to strengthen spiritual intelligence for learning (Sisk & Torrance, 2001) are illustrated in Table 2.

Spiritual Intelligence Components are depicted in Table 3, along with the Key Virtues, the Symbolic System and Brain States.

Table 3: Spiritual Intelligence Components

SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE COMPONENTS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Core Capacities: Concern with cosmic/existential issues and the skills of meditating, intuition, and visualization. 2. Core Values: Connectedness, unity of all, compassion, a sense of balance, responsibility, and service. 3. Core Experiences: Awareness of ultimate values and their meaning, peak experiences, feelings of transcendence, and heightened awareness. 4. Key Virtues: Truth, justice, compassion, and caring. 5. Symbolic System: Poetry, music, dance, metaphor, and stories. 6. Brain States: Rapture as described by Persinger (1996) and Ramachandran and Blakeslee (1998).

Table 4: Seven Ways to Raise or Develop Spiritual Intelligence

SEVEN WAYS TO RAISE OR DEVELOP SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Think about your goals, desires, and wants in order to bring your life into perspective and balance, and identify your values; 2. Access your inner processes and use your vision to see your goals, desires, wants fulfilled, and experience the emotion connected with this fulfillment; 3. Integrate your personal and universal vision, and recognize your connectedness; 4. Take responsibility for your goals, desires and wants; 5. Develop a sense of community by inviting more people into your life; 6. Focus on love and compassion; and 7. When chance knocks at your door, invite it in and take advantage of coincidences.

Seven Ways to Develop or Raise Spiritual Intelligence

To develop or strengthen your spiritual intelligence, focus on the Core Values of community, connectedness and oneness of all, compassion, a sense of balance, responsibility and service. To develop these Core Values, not only rely on your five senses, but use a multi-sensory approach to problem-solving, including visualization, meditation, and deep intuition. With this basic premise, the following, seven ways can help you develop your spiritual intelligence. They are depicted in Table 4.

It is also important to recognize our relationship to the Earth. A clear tradition of caring, connectedness, and harmony with nature was identified in the exploration of Ancient Wisdom and Eastern Mysticism, and in the Wisdom of Native Americans and indigenous people. In the exploration of Psychology, the need to search for meaning and identity emerged as key elements for achievement and fulfillment. In the exploration of Science, in quantum Physics connectedness emerged from a thought experiment that verified if two particles have been intimately associated, and then separated in space, they remain connected nonetheless. This concept of connectedness in Science includes everyone; we are all connected to one another, to the Earth, and to the cosmos.

Filling that Empty Space in the Lives of People

As people tap their inner knowledge to solve problems, they learn to trust their inner authority, to create their vision and to realize a sense of empowerment, all of which represent behaviors identified by Sisk & Torrance (2001) as spiritual intelligence. As the concept of spiritual intelligence or (SQ) gains momentum in both popular and scholarly literature and practice, both parents and educators can help high ability and gifted children and youth understand and further develop their spiritual intelligence as a viable form of giftedness. Addressing the likely traits of spiritual

intelligence at home and in the schools will help strengthen those traits for successful and productive learning. Educating for spiritual development and higher consciousness contains the hope and goal of developing students who can use their spiritual intelligence to discover what is essential in life, particularly in their own lives and what they can bring to nourish the world.

Dorothy Sisk, Ph.D., holds the Conn Chair in Education at Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas and directs the Center for Gifted Education. Dorothy was the former director of the U.S. Office of Gifted and Talented in Washington D.C., a teacher of the gifted at the elementary, middle and high school levels, a district supervisor of gifted education, and coordinator of gifted education at the University of South Florida. Dr. Sisk was a founding member of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC) and served as its president and executive administrator. Her major research interests are the talent development process, leadership development and effective education intervention for gifted students.

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Acceleration Policies and Practices in Canada

LANNIE KANEVSKY, CANADA

LYNN DARE, CANADA

Academically advanced students in Canada may be offered one or more of the 18 forms of content- or grade-based acceleration identified by Southern and Jones (2004, see figures). The critical word in that sentence is “may.” It indicates Canadian educational policies addressing accelerative practices are permissive (not mandatory) and flexible, i.e., they may be implemented (or not) in a variety of ways at the discretion of local administrators. However, the forms of acceleration available to any student vary depending on where they live. Educational policies are set by each of the 10 provinces and three territories, so a student may find it’s easier to skip a grade in Québec than it is in Prince Edward Island. And because these policies are permissive, students in neighboring schools or school districts may find practices vary within jurisdictions as well.

Here we provide a brief overview of Canadian acceleration policies and practices based on two studies, both previously published in the *Canadian Journal of Education*: an analysis of relevant policy documents (see Kanevsky & Clelland, 2013) and a survey sent to every public school district nation-wide (see Kanevsky, 2011). The goals of this work were to determine which types of acceleration were permitted and what was actually happening across Canada.

Educational policies addressing acceleration

First, a reminder...Canada is very big. That said, many of our school districts are geographically large in size but have few students who are sprinkled across vast regions. Canada’s size, as well as differences in climate, history, and culture are reflected in local educational policies. The search for mention of any of the many types of acceleration in government documents

revealed intriguing results (Kanevsky & Clelland, 2015). Since that time, some policies have changed; however, most have remained the same.

Overall, Canadian policies related to acceleration were described in similar terms but varied in popularity across jurisdictions. In Figures 1 and 2, the solid coloured regions in each bar represent the types of acceleration that were explicitly recommended as accelerative options for students with advanced understanding of the core curriculum. The striped regions indicate options mentioned that could be flexibly interpreted to offer students experiences beyond their grade level, so they were considered potentially accelerative options. For example, in addition to three jurisdictions that explicitly recommended correspondence courses (online or distance education), documents from seven other jurisdictions mentioned correspondence courses as an option for all students (as shown in Figure 2). This means school districts in the latter seven could, if they chose to, offer students courses at their grade level or beyond. As a result, they were considered a potential accelerative option available to educators and students, because this interpretation was not explicitly stated in the documents.

When comparing Figures 1 and 2, it becomes apparent that forms of acceleration that enabled students to move through content more quickly or at advanced levels (Figure 1) were more often recommended than forms that involved placing advanced students within higher grades with older students (Figure 2). This difference likely reflects a general resistance to moving students ahead of their chronological ages due to concerns for their social and emotional well-being. Few Canadian studies address this concern but the findings of American and Australian investigations are relevant (e.g., Assouline, Colangelo & VanTassel-Baska, 2015; Gross, 1993; 2004). That work has shown most students thrive when placed with older students IF the

decision to advance a student is based on a comprehensive assessment (not just academic standing) and the student and receiving teacher are supported and monitored.

Explicit support for acceleration of any kind was strongest in four provinces whose policies reflected a categorical orientation to students with special needs (vs. non-categorical). They were the two most western provinces (Alberta and British Columbia) and two of the most eastern (New Brunswick and Nova Scotia). At the time of the study, surprisingly, texts from Prince Edward Island and the Northwest Territories discouraged acceleration. Both have now revised their documents to recommend flexible pacing, although they do not mention accelerating learning in any way.

Acceleration Practices

In the 2011 study, Canadian school districts were asked to help us understand if those policies were being implemented. Of the 366 public school districts receiving surveys, 166 responded (44.5% response rate). A summary of the nation-wide results is presented in Figure 3. No province or territory had a school district that claimed to offer all 18 types of acceleration. British Columbia permitted the most, 12, followed by Alberta with 11. British Columbia also had the highest participation rates for eight types of acceleration, more than any other province or territory.

Consistent with what was found in the policy documents, content-based acceleration practices were more popular than grade-based. Québec was the anomaly where the opposite was true. Their school districts permitted and practiced more grade-based acceleration. This is due to “Dérogation 52” which came into effect in the 1980’s (Gagné & Gagnier, 2003). It is a provision allowing for a “dérogation à l’âge d’admission à

>>> next page

l'école" (exception to the age of admission to school), which means schools receive funding for early entrants. As a result of this initiative, the proportion of Québec's school districts allowing children to begin kindergarten early is the highest in the country and more than twice the national rate (94.1% vs. 37% respectively).

As expected, acceleration was permitted more than it was practiced across Canada. Although correspondence courses and single-subject acceleration earned top ranks for being permitted and practiced, the remaining forms of acceleration differed dramatically. For example, more than 70 percent of districts reported allowing students to graduate early from high school or earn course credit by taking an exam, however 36% or less actually had a student do so in the previous year. A few small districts explained that this was simply because they had no students in that year that were good candidates but they had done so in the past.

Every form of acceleration was permitted in a few school districts, and was not permitted in others. Those most often denied were all grade-based. Multi-year grade-skipping was not allowed in more than 80% of the responding districts and 34% did not allow single year. Approximately 60% did not permit early entrance to Kindergarten or Grade 1. This was often because government funding was not provided for early entrants in some jurisdictions.

Our most consistent finding related to acceleration practices was the inconsistency of support for and execution of them. Once again, this uneven support is likely a reflection of the concerns and obstacles that impede their broader acceptance and application. Content-based options are often preferred because they are less visible than placing bright students with older learners. They may also avoid concerns regarding possible negative psychosocial consequences. In some cases, they create fewer administrative challenges (e.g., scheduling). However, concerns related to workload may arise when implementing many content-based accelerative strategies as they place responsibility for differentiating and managing advanced curriculum on the teacher.

As in Jones and Southern's (1992) work, a school district's enrollment was associated with their acceleration practices. It played a greater role in the likelihood that a student was actually accelerated in a particular way than it did in whether or not a district permitted it. With higher enrollments, it is possible that larger districts were more likely to have had one or more strong candidates simply because they had more students.

Acceleration in the Context of Inclusive Education

Canada is a vast, diverse country where the philosophy of inclusion is championed. Historically, advocates for inclusion have argued that segregated education (i.e., separate classes for students with special needs) violated students' fundamental civil rights (Dare & Nowicki, 2018). Fundamental civil rights are protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982). The Charter offers legal protection against discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, **age** [emphasis added], or mental or physical disability. The Canadian philosophy of inclusion is rooted in the acceptance of diversity and promoting a sense of belonging among all students. Typically, advocates for inclusion have focused on including students with disabilities in classes with same-age peers. But policies and practices that organize students according to chronological age may actually restrict their access to acceleration, especially grade-based forms. Nonetheless, for advanced learners who have demonstrated competency with age-based curriculum the optimal learning environment may be with older classmates, where they can engage with educational content that extends their understanding. We feel it is imperative that age diversity be added to the characteristics of learners in inclusive learning environments.

Closing thoughts

Government documents addressing the education of high ability students and the many forms of acceleration often used discretionary and vague language. In the absence of explicit policies and guidelines, local decision-makers are left to decide on the nature and extent of their implementation. This discretion may

be seen as an obstacle, or perhaps an unrecognized opportunity for creative interpretations that might result in advanced learning experiences for students in need of them.

Our hope is that this work set a baseline for efforts to Canadian scholars and educators to enhance opportunities for advanced learners to avoid boredom and to use their time in school to learn what they don't already know (Stanley, 2000). Acceleration of any kind will not be sufficient to provide a high ability learner with an optimal education. Blending one or more of these options with others, and with differentiated curriculum, will offer a more comprehensive, powerful educational response tailored to students' extraordinary potentials. Advanced learners need opportunities to go deeper, as well as faster; to access and apply more complex and challenging experiences than are appropriate for their age mates; to learn with students who share their passions and potentials; and to pursue their interests as well as achieving prescribed outcomes.

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Figure 1:
Number of Canadian provinces & territories explicitly or potentially supporting each form of content-based acceleration (Kanevsky & Clelland, 2015).

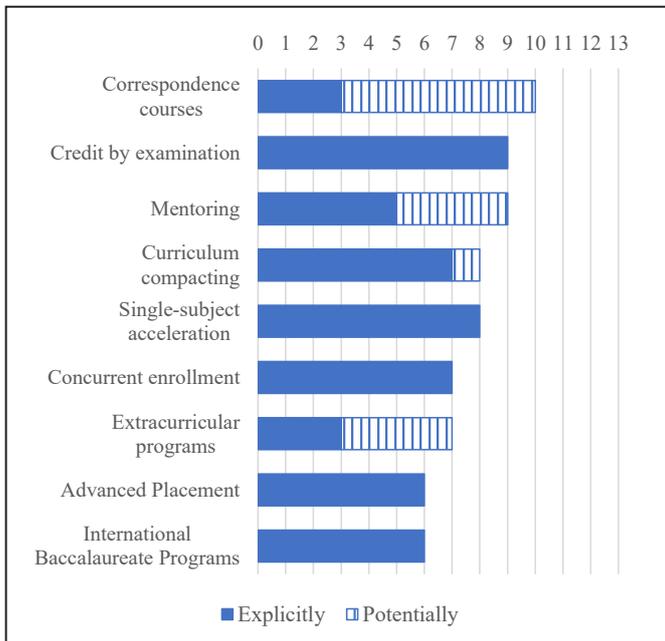


Figure 2:
Number of Canadian provinces & territories explicitly or potentially supporting each form of grade-based acceleration (Kanevsky & Clelland, 2015).

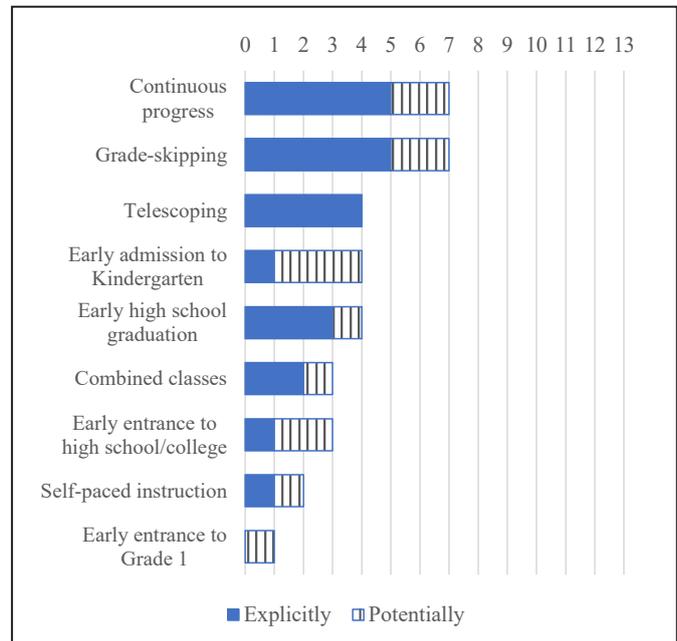
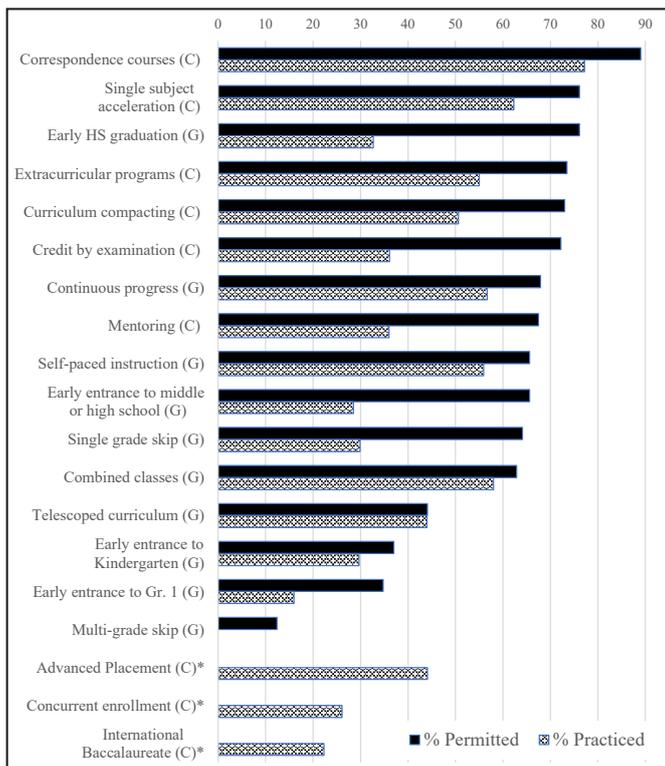


Figure 3:
Percentages of Canadian school districts indicating they permitted and practiced each form of acceleration in the previous school year (Kanevsky, 2011). (Those followed by (C) are content-based; types followed by (G) are grade-based.)



* Items asking whether or not this form of acceleration was permitted were unintentionally omitted from surveys sent to Québec so this data was not included in the graph.

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No Child Left Bored?

Teachers'
Corner

MARJOVAN DAM, THE NETHERLANDS
WILLEKEMIDDELBOS,
THE NETHERLANDS

Abstract

During the period September 2016 to July 2017 a study was made of the effects of the Vooruitwerklab Enrichment Programme (VWL). The VWL is based on the triarchic theory of Sternberg (1985). The study examined the effects of the VWL on the development of analytical, creative and practical thinking skills of gifted children in upper secondary education. Furthermore, the social-emotional child characteristics of motivation, well-being and self-

concept were studied. An experimental group and a control group of both twelve pupils were studied. The research model existed of a pre-test, the intervention VWL, a post-test and a delayed post-test. The Dutch translation of the Aurora Assessment Battery and the Dutch School Attitude Questionnaire were used for the measurements. Immediately after the intervention, the creative thinking skills of the pupils who participated in the VWL had developed positively. In this group, the value of the self-concept went down during the intervention. Several factors affected the effect measurement, including insufficient transfer to the regular class. The VWL only has effect if the acquired skills can be used in daily practice. In addition to

the most common analytical instruction in the regular class more attention to creative instruction would have a positive influence on the development of creative thinking skills.

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Gifted at University: The Forgotten Age

Teachers'
Corner

Research into factors identified by gifted students themselves as impediments to their study success and well-being

SIMONE KEIJSERS, THE NETHERLANDS

Abstract

Although increasingly more research is being done on gifted children in primary and secondary schools, few studies focus on gifted adults. Even fewer examine the impact of giftedness on students at university. They, too, face considerable challenges, which can result in (relative) underachievement and/or reduced social-emotional well-being.

This research mapped out factors identified by gifted university students themselves as impediments to their study success and well-being. Twelve students at the

University of Leiden were interviewed, and their statements were extracted and clustered, to form an inventory of common impediments. Based on this inventory, a number of recommendations were made, with the aim of improving the functioning and well-being of gifted students at university. The main recommendations were: improve staff awareness about giftedness, so that counsellors and teachers can better recognize gifted students at university. The second recommendation was for more research to be done into gifted students at university, to ascertain how this target group can best be served. Furthermore, it was recommended to primary and secondary education to focus more on gifted pupils' study and self-regulation skills. Lastly, it

was recommended to universities and specifically to Honours Colleges to enter into dialogue with gifted students to learn how to stimulate the optimal use of their talents.

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Does music make children happier and more social?

Music education for gifted students at school

ESTER VAN BALLEGOOIJEN-BOGAERT,
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For this study, the social-emotional development of gifted children, in the form of well-being, self-esteem and social acceptance, in relation to music education was researched. The participants took weekly music lessons, from a professional music teacher, for six months and participated in a music project. The social-emotional development was monitored by taking the "SchoolVragenLijst-internet" (SVL-i). To compare the test results, the paired T-test was used. To get a better understanding of the quantitative data, qualitative data has been obtained by

taking an experimental questionnaire and conducting personal interviews.

The sample size consisted of 28 gifted children aged seven to eleven years. The well-being within this group improved significantly: $t = 2,049$, $p = 0,050$ as did the social skills: $t(27) = 2,721$, $p = 0,011$. The level of self-confidence did not show any significant improvement: $t(27) = 1,385$, $p = 0,177$ and the level of feeling socially accepted did not show significant improvement: $t(27) = 2,022$, $p = 0,053$. The social skills showed the biggest improvement.

As far as is known to the author, this is the first research on the social-emotional

development of gifted children in relation to music education. In this paper the outcome, value and influence of music education on improvement of social-emotional development are discussed critically.

Ester van Ballegooijen has been working as a music teacher at a secondary education school for the past eleven years. The final four years she has been guiding gifted children and has set up fulltime education for children who have skipped one or two years in primary school. She has been working in gifted education on a primary school since 2017.

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Reports by National Correspondents of ECHA

AUSTRALIA



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A snapshot of recent activity in gifted education in Australia

Gifted education remains a contentious issue in Australia, with academic researchers and giftedness associations frequently forced to defend existing programmes against critics. The Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (AAEGT), along with its constituent state associations, is prominent in promoting the educational needs of gifted students. The current president of the association, Lesley Henderson (Flinders University), has highlighted the importance of teacher training and pointed to the very few Australian universities that offer compulsory units on giftedness

in pre-service teacher education. The general consensus among researchers in the giftedness field is that teachers are generally willing to help gifted children but they feel ill-prepared to meet their educational demands, particularly in classrooms that also include children with learning difficulties and so on.

The state of New South Wales is currently in the process of releasing a new policy on Gifted and Talented Education, which has involved wide consultation of stakeholders across the state. The new policy will include new resources to support teachers and schools in implementing the requirements. It is the hope of giftedness advocates that the new policy will be taken seriously and that appropriate professional development is provided to allow teachers to fulfil their important roles.

The Victorian Association for Gifted and Talented Children recently completed a series of seminars on giftedness for parents

and teachers in rural and regional Victoria. The Association was supported in providing this valuable series by the Department of Education & Training, Victoria. The seminars were very well received. The Association also recently completed a revision of its VAGTC Resource Book (see the VAGTC website for details).

Australia (through the instigation of the AAEGT) held its annual Gifted Awareness Week in March 2018. Activities in each state aimed to raise awareness of the needs of gifted children and youth and celebrate giftedness in its many forms. The theme for 2018 was 'Acceptance: Diversity & Equity'.

Following on its success in hosting the World Council meeting in 2017, the AAEGT is bidding for the next Asia-Pacific Conference on Giftedness in 2020. If the bid is successful it is planned that the conference will be held in Adelaide, the capital city of South Australia.

AUSTRIA



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In Austria, ECHA training courses in gifted education have a long tradition, commencing with the first official Upper Austrian course for school teachers in 1996. From then on, and starting in Salzburg, the Austrian ECHA Society has been both spreading course offers across Austria and advancing and developing further ever since. Currently, it is a central and significant part of Austria's educational land-scape.

In March 2018, after the completion of a previous training course in gifted education

(Prof. Dr. Wagner), the University College of Education Upper Austria started a new 30 ECTS course, supervised by Prof. Dr. Sodl, with 27 motivated and keen teachers.

In addition to that, 23 teachers just finished a four-semester 30 ECTS course at the University College of Education of Lower Austria, with Dr. Lewald and Prof. Dr. Mönks proudly awarding the certificates (see photograph). For the coming academic years, Lower Austria is already preparing additional courses, supervised by Prof. Stachl.

And the KPH Wien / Krems, too, regularly offers ECHA training courses, complemented by additional Master programmes in gifted education. The TIBI (Thomasianum - Institut für Begabungsentwicklung und Innovation),

in particular, has accumulated expertise in this area of teacher education and training. In other Austrian federal states, such as Styria, ECHA training courses are being prepared, too.

Such encouraging and gratifying developments rest on the society members' eager willingness to engage and contribute way above average. This development, however, cannot hide the fact that there is still a lot to be done, before the promotion of giftedness, in particular with respect to high abilities, will be applied professionally and with a sound theoretical foundation by Austrian school teachers in their regular classes.



Photograph: The proudly awarded ECHA-graduates (Lower Austria) with Prof. Dr. F. Mönks, Prof. Dr. G. Lehwald and Prof. Mag. G. Stachl (Vicepresident of ECHA Austria).

LUXEMBOURG



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In Luxembourg, the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth (MENJE: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse) is the only agent responsible for the planning of school education. Until now, the state classical and general secondary schools had only a restricted autonomy in proposing some optional courses.

As Luxembourg is characterized by a strong presence of foreigners (according to recent STATEC data, 47, 9% of the inhabitants of the country hold a foreign nationality), this multilingualism is reflected in the education system. Each pupil has to learn at least French, German and English, and the annual instruction time dedicated to foreign languages exceeds that of other European countries (European Commission: Eurydice).

During the last years, the Luxembourgish education system has evolved towards a broader diversification of provisions for students with special needs, while maintaining the basic multilingualism. In 2017, a new law was voted, allowing

the classical and general secondary establishments to develop a greater autonomy in the creation of new sections and programmes. Thus, the specific needs of different subgroups of students can be better met (Journal officiel du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, mémorial No 789; Projet de loi no 7074).

According to the new regulations (Projet de règlement grand-ducal 4782), some classical secondary schools implemented the first modifications in their programmes and sections in September 2018. Let us stress that the new regulations are not especially focused on highly gifted students. However, these students can benefit from this new flexibility when they opt for an appropriate educational establishment.

Especially, the following three types of modifications could be of interest for gifted and talented students:

- During the last three years of secondary education, some classical secondary schools offer new sections in computer science and communication, or else in architecture.
- There will be more state secondary schools proposing European curricula (for instance in Clervaux and Junglinster).

- A greater variety of optional courses will be implemented (for instance, an introduction to the Chinese language in the Lycée Athénée in Luxembourg), opening new tracks for subsequent studies at the university.

The first evaluations of the new measures will start at the end of the summer semester 2019. In any case, there seem to be great chances for gifted and talented students.

Documents

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Projet de loi no 7074 portant sur l'enseignement secondaire.

Projet de règlement grand-ducal (4782 RSY/ JJE) portant sur les matières obligatoires et les matières à options des différentes sections et classes et sur l'organisation et le programme de l'examen de fin d'études secondaires de l'enseignement secondaire classique.

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