

ECHA NEWS

EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR HIGH ABILITY

AUTUMN 2019

President's Message

Dear ECHA Members,

This report covers the year from our 2018 General Assembly in last August in Dublin Ireland. ECHA was continuing its more than three decades of traditions to serve its members. Let me highlight a few points of this work from the past year.

- At the time of writing this report (September 19th) we look forward to the first Thematic ECHA Conference in Dubrovnik on Creativity (see the image of this gemstone city enclosed). The 17th International ECHA Conference will be in Porto (Portugal) on 9-12 September 2020. The 2nd Thematic ECHA Conference on "Closing the achievement gaps in gifted education" in Budapest (Hungary) on 25-27 March 2021. We have published the call for the 18th International ECHA Conference in 2022. We have already received two applications. The place of ECHA 2022 will be announced in October. With these, the flow of ECHA Conferences enjoys a healthy continuity allowing our annual General Assemblies to take place at one of the ECHA Conferences.
- We have a healthy, stable number of paying members of ECHA having more than three hundred members now. Please remember that the General Committee introduced a new understanding of the duration of ECHA membership by dividing the year into four quarters. In this way it is not an economic disadvantage to become an ECHA member e.g. in October, since this membership is not expiring in the end of the year (as in the former system) but in September 30th next year. The growing interest in the European Talent Support Network helps us to increase our membership.
- From January 2019 the General Committee of ECHA appointed the Secretary of ECHA, Colm O'Reilly to become the Treasurer of ECHA. Article 11(1) of ECHA makes it explicitly possible that the posts of the Secretary and Treasurer may be held by one person. In agreement with Article 11(2) of ECHA at the same time the General Committee appointed the Vice-President of ECHA, Albert Ziegler, as the third member of the ECHA Executive Committee besides the President and the Secretary-Treasurer. Colm succeeded Tessa Kieboom in the post of the Treasurer. We would like to thank Tessa for her devoted work as the Treasurer of ECHA in the last decade! ECHA opened a new bank account at the Bank of Ireland and the sum from the former account has been transferred to the new account. We thank Colm accepting the role of the Treasurer of ECHA.
- We started to prepare an Ethical Code of ECHA whose draft text approved by the General Committee will be distributed to all ECHA members asking their suggestions and will be discussed by the 2020 General Assembly of ECHA. An Ethical Committee of ECHA will be suggested to be elected by the General Assembly and will be asked to prepare a guideline for an anti-harassment policy for ECHA Conferences.
- It is my pleasure to report, that the ECHA Education Board has completed the qualification of the Austrian and Dutch training programmes. At the time of the completion of the current version of the report (19th September) the qualification of the German programme is in progress. Further applications are to be considered. The qualification process is detailed on the ECHA website (<https://echa.info>)
- From January 2019 the list of the qualified programmes will also be uploaded soon. The Board has now a specific bank account of ECHA (at the Bank of Ireland) which allows the direct collection of the qualification fees of ECHA Trainings. Please note that after 2019 no trainings are able to issue an "ECHA Diploma", which have not been qualified before. Interested members may contact Lianne Hoogeveen for more information at training@echa.info.
- Our scientific journal, High Ability Studies has an increased impact factor (1.13) circulation number and downloads. Great thanks to all contributors and to the Editor-in-chief, Albert Ziegler!
- We continued the distribution of the spring and autumn issues of ECHA News as a pdf file directly to our members. Many thanks to Annette Heinbokel for her continuous efforts to fill ECHA News with high-quality content! Please help her more in this!
- Thanks to the efforts of Victor Müller-Oppliger, most ECHA National Correspondents have been re-elected, and members were able to read the reports of more than half of them in the last few issues of ECHA News. We will continue this series, and will re-vitalize this key asset of ECHA in other ways, too. From now on we will organize annual meetings of the National Correspondents at each International or Thematic ECHA Conference.
- The Facebook-Group of ECHA (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ECHAGroup/>) increased its membership from 2000 to 3100 and has actively changing and

high quality content. Many thanks for those who contribute to the site regularly. Please join our Facebook site (if you have not done so), and follow their example to share your findings, ideas and questions with this growing community.

■ Last but not least, following the decision of the 2014 General Assembly to help and guide the formation and the establishment of the European Talent Support Network, I am happy to report that presently the Network has cc. 400 cooperating nodes in more than forty countries in Europe and all around the world. The Qualification Committee of ECHA qualified two new Talent Centres (in Varasdin, Croatia and Mawhiba Centre in Saudi Arabia) in 2018, thus the number of Talent Centres rose to 25. The Network is served by its Council led by Albert Ziegler and by its coordinator and secretary, Csilla Fuszek. In 2019 the European Talent Support Network became an independent NGO registered in the Netherlands. Congratulations to Albert Ziegler, Csilla Fuszek and thanks for the help of Lianne Hoogeveen in this process! ECHA and the Network are formulating a Memorandum of Understanding about their continuous cooperation in their operation regarding talent support. The Network has now frequent newsletters (TalentWeb), and organizes international cooperation in talent support in various ways. The Network has its Youth Platform which also re-elected its Council currently led by Veronika Deketova. By the great help of ECHA Conference organizers the Youth Platform organized 3 successful European Youth Summits at ECHA Conferences between 2016 and 2019 and had a summit in Budapest as well, the members of the Platform started a number of joint projects.

These were some of the important highlights of ECHA's work in the past year. However, the most important part, the personal contacts, mutual enrichment, the exchange of best practices and the joy of cooperation cannot be really described in a report. Many thanks all of you for your contribution and growing the traditional ECHA spirit!

Peter Csermely, President of ECHA
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ECHA Conference in Porto

Portugal · 9-12 September 2020

Dear colleagues,

We are happy to announce that the ECHA 2020 abstract submission platform is now open and we look very much forward to receiving your contributions!

For detailed submission guidelines please see the website:
<http://echa2020.org/en/content/call-for-papers/abstract-submission/submission-guidelines.html>

Please note that if you would like to be included in the pre-acceptance notification in January you need to submit your abstract until 31 December 2019.

We have thought to include some alternative formats of presentation to allow for more interaction and discussion and hope that this will be well received.

KEYDATES ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1 October 2019 | Abstract submission opening |
| 15 January 2020 | Pre-acceptance notification |
| | Please note that to be included in the pre-acceptance notification your abstract must be submitted until 31 December 2019. |
| 15 March 2020 | Deadline submission of Abstracts/Papers |
| 30 April 2020 | Notification of Acceptance/Rejection |
| 30 June 2020 | Early Registration deadline |
| 15 July 2020 | Registration deadline for presenting author |
| 9-12 September 2020 | 17TH ECHA Conference Dates |

Please see the website: echa2020.org

Editorial

ANNETTE HEINBOKEL, GERMANY

In July 2019 the 23rd World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children took place in Nashville, Tennessee. There were 760 participants from 45 countries. If you want to know more about what is happening in the world you can read the reports by some of the delegates to the WCGTC in its newsletter¹.

I suppose new and young participants were overwhelmed by the wealth of presentations on offer, the same as I was when my interest in gifted education began in the mid-70s. Over time I learned that there is rarely something basically new: I know too much already. The two columns of gifted education that most interest practitioners are still there: enrichment and acceleration and the way they supplement and overlap each other. They are adapted to whatever is possible in different countries, what the attitudes of society towards the different forms of giftedness are, what financial and personal resources exist. What has also remained the same: enrichment is far more popular than acceleration, although in general acceleration is known to be far more effective than enrichment. Camilla Benbow, one of the keynote speakers, and colleagues have done long term research on acceleration. They found that those who had been accelerated one way or another in general outperformed matched controls – classmates who were just as gifted but had not been accelerated – in the areas of doctoral degrees, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics),

graduate degrees, patents, and doctoral degree graduation.

What I enjoy at every conference: that every time there are more countries, more school districts, more individual teachers who care for gifted girls and boys, apart from all the other children they have to teach. And there can be changes in attitude. In this issue of the newsletter there is a report by Shengpeng Huang and Yan Kong from China. They studied the public images of giftedness in Chinese newspapers. The image of 'early ripe, early rot' and the 'mad genius' theory are not unknown in China. One result of the study was that universities that cared for gifted children have become more open towards the media, and that the focus that had been on STEM subjects shifted. It has become more important to develop all the abilities that gifted individuals have.

What impressed me most this year: A key note presentation by Melinda Webber from New Zealand. First she reported on gifted Maori women and men in the past, among them the first Maori woman, Dr. Ngapare Hopa, who gained a PhD from Oxford² and what they can mean for young Maori people. Webber's research examines the ways race, ethnicity, culture and identity impact the lives of young people, particularly Māori students. Her research focusses on the question 'How can we foster cultural pride and academic

aspiration among Māori students?' Apart from making them aware of their own abilities they also learn about successful ancestors who can be role models.

I have been aware for a very long time that ever since human beings were human beings (and maybe even before that), there must always been some who were more intelligent, creative, adventurous, forward looking than the average, in one word: gifted. Maybe there could be a focus on indigenous people who survived in very harsh circumstances, in the arctic, the jungles, the hot deserts. They must have had skills that we can only admire. With modern facilities of food preservation, transport and technology etc. many of those skills are being lost. But which of the skills are still there today? When we look back in history, we can only be in awe at what our ancestors invented, made and achieved. Just one example: the sky disc of Nebra. It dates back to 1600 BC, the bronze age. It is the oldest concrete depiction of the sky yet known from anywhere in the world. It shows a full moon and a crescent moon and 'the rising and setting of the Pleiades on March 10 and October 17 in the Bronze Age, thereby helping an agrarian community to determine the right time to sow and to reap³.

Annette Heinbokel, editor

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¹ [https://world-gifted.org/World-Gifted-Newsletter/wg-38\(1\).pdf](https://world-gifted.org/World-Gifted-Newsletter/wg-38(1).pdf)

² <https://www.number8network.co.nz/2018/11/11/oxfords-first-maori-woman-phd-remembers-gordonton-school/>

³ <http://www.megaliths.net/nebraskydisk.pdf>

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The Importance of an Extended Definition in Gifted Research

CAROLINE SIMS, SWEDEN

A recurring line of critique from within the field of research in gifted education is that suggestions on how gifted students should be taught, where and why, are predominantly based on theoretical constructions and models, without connection to empirical studies (Subotnik et al. 2011; Rinn & Bishop 2015; Steenbergen-Hu et al. 2016). However, even if the advantages with such an approach could easily be understood, a follow-up question which seems equally relevant is to what extent more empirical studies by necessity generate more solid findings?

To start with, effects of educational interventions in any form or setting may be difficult to measure due to a variety of confounding factors, although it could be claimed that the use of gifted students as participants may add further to the complexity. For example, in a number of studies gifted students are described as underachieving, experiencing boredom, self-doubt, depression and a sense of being different, or even alienated, due to lack of stimulation and educational challenges (Robinson & Clinkenbeard 1998; Zeidner & Schleyer 1999; Moon et al 2002; Gross 2003; Lee & Olszewski-Kubilius 2006; Kuo et al. 2010; Persson 2010; Lee et al. 2012; Gómez-Arízaga & Conejeros-Solar 2013; Dai et al. 2015; Jung et al 2015; Laine & Tirri 2016; Kitsantas et al.2017). Partly, this reaction could be explained by the use of Seligman's (1975) theories on 'avoidance learning' and 'learned helplessness', both indicating that current behaviour and expectations are strongly coloured by previous negative experiences. Applied to the context of gifted research it means it will take time to build students' trust in an intervention before they start participating, enough for it to say something on its effect.

Moreover, there are also indications in previous studies of gifted students reacting negatively when they are finally challenged. For example, Moon et al. (2002) mention negative reactions among gifted students when having to work harder than they are used to, and Berlin (2009) describes how students in an accelerated programme list the amount of time they then have to spend on homework as one of the negative factors of the intervention. This latter point is also confirmed by Coleman (2002) when referring to gifted students claiming it to be harder to learn how to study, then to learn the actual content of the object of study.

The common denominator in these descriptions is how the gifted students on many occasions have been identified as not equal to high performers. However, to what extent is this awareness of diversity in giftedness acknowledged in a sample of empirical studies on educational interventions for gifted students?

To investigate this further a sample consisting of 44 articles on acceleration and enrichment was constructed from Web of Science with the combinations (gifted* OR talented OR "high-ability") AND acceleration, as well as (gifted* OR talented OR "high-ability") AND

enrichment . The articles were published between 1998 to 2018 and written in English in the areas of 'psychology educational', 'education special' and 'education educational research', since these three categories generated the largest number of articles.

A primary observation of the sample as a whole gave that there was a strong focus on empirical data and in particular on using students as respondents. Moreover, another general starting point was a confirmation of the benefits of the intervention found in previous studies. The general aim, in the current articles therefore, was not to argue for acceleration or enrichment per se. Instead, a multitude of other aspects were studied, such as:

- Students' improvement of academic ability
- Different socio-emotional effects i.e. concept of self and/or peer relationships
- Factors claimed to support motivation or self-efficacy
- Suggestions how to improve conditions for gifted minority students
- Suggestions how to improve conditions for gifted students from low-income families
- Suggestions how to improve conditions for gifted students in rural areas.
- Teachers' and/or parents' perceptions of acceleration and enrichment

A clear majority of articles claimed that the educational adjustments have positive outcomes for the students concerned, both in terms of academic improvement but also on the variety of socio-emotional factors. Nevertheless, in spite of these comforting results we might also want to ask what gifted student these studies had in mind. For example, what methods are used to identify the participants as gifted? What significance is given to test results, both as a qualifiers for participation, but also in terms of measuring outcome? How varied are these methods? Are for example test results combined with other methods of identification important to find the gifted students who do not necessarily test well?

When more than one method is applied, do the additional methods add information about the students' abilities, or are they actually based on the same information, such as high test scores in combination with recommendation by teachers (based on a perception of giftedness as equal to scoring high on tests)?

To what extent do these studies take into consideration factors present before the studies which might influence the results? An example could be that a demanding selection process for participation and as a consequence resulting in a sample consisting of gifted students who are successful learners already?

The answer to all of these questions in the current sample all boils down to a narrow definition of giftedness as clearly equal to a high performing and a high scoring person, in spite of studies claiming the opposite. Why might this be the case?

Judging by what was said in a variety of conference presentations at the conference of the WCGTC in Nashville this summer, it could be argued that research into giftedness, and in conjunction gifted education, are working hard in a number of countries all around the world from a position of marginalization. We could find this in terms of struggles to get funding, in terms of limited resource allocation, the lack of specialized education for teachers and students, in terms of where educational issues concerning gifted education is on the political agenda, and who is allowed to speak there. A frightening thought would be that researchers into giftedness have to produce positive outcomes to certify acknowledgement and avoid further marginalization. Who would like to invest in research which does not seem to work?

Taking into account the brief study into the definition of giftedness in the selected sample, what seems to be the case is that not only more empirical studies are needed, but also studies where we allow ourselves as researchers to think critically on what grounds our conclusions are based. One possible interpretation is that what we see here is yet another indication of marketization of research, where ends justify the means more than the other way around.

This article is based on her paper presented at the WCGTC conference in Nashville, USA:

Sims, Caroline (2019). "A Review of Educational Interventions – Findings, Methodological Shortcomings and Implications for Future Research"

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Creating equal opportunities in education by means of academic language.

LINEKE VAN TRICHT, THE NETHERLANDS

Pupils from a less advantaged background, such as a low socioeconomic status or a native language other than Dutch, do not always fulfil their potential in terms of academic success. The project 'Creating equal opportunities at school: Empowering pupils from less-advantaged backgrounds through teaching academic language', financed by Erasmus+, contributes to bridging the gap between these pupils' current academic success and their cognitive talent by means of teaching Dutch academic language.

Inequality in education is a big problem in every prosperous country. The Netherlands and Belgium even belong to the 10 countries in the world where socioeconomic status has the biggest impact on school success¹. Socioeconomic status is the position people have in society. Examples of indicators that are used to measure socioeconomic status for children are: the language spoken at home and the income, professional status and educational level of their parents². Inequality in opportunities means that background and socioeconomic status, instead of cognitive or academic abilities, determines academic success³. Language seems to play an important role in this.

It is essential that schools, pupils and parents become aware of this problem. Also, they should know where to find and how to make use of the learning materials that are available to teach pupils 'school language', also called academic language. The project 'Creating equal opportunities at school: Empowering pupils from less-advantaged backgrounds through teaching academic language', financed by Erasmus+, offers a solution. The purpose of this project is to improve the academic language skills of cognitively talented pupils from less advantaged backgrounds. It aims to increase the chance that these pupils' academic success is in line with their potential, because language is no

longer a barrier, leading to a growth in their motivation and self-confidence.

Different experts and schools from the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK are working together in this project, benefiting from each other's experience and expertise. A similar project, which served as an example for this current project, has been carried out in the UK. It was called the REAL-project⁴, and the results were very positive.

The first step in the Erasmus+ project is to select cognitively talented pupils from a less-advantaged background through a culture fair test. The 10% to 20% of best scoring pupils per school will start working with the Dutch academic words in September 2019. The project ends in June 2021, after which time it will be evaluated.

The selected pupils will use an online programme to help them learn academic Dutch. Teachers and experts have worked together to compile a list of academic words, based on previously developed lists. The online programme allows pupils to actively study and use the words. The aim is that they will be able to recognize

and use academic language in formal school settings as well as in their everyday lives so that a lack of language skills no longer forms a barrier when it comes to academic success.

The project is innovative because this is a target group which is underrepresented in many Gifted-and-Talented programmes. The way pupils are selected and the development of an academic word list in Dutch is also new. From a broad perspective, the end goal should be that the influence of socioeconomic status on talent development, school results and school success will diminish. This fundamental change could ultimately lead to a more diverse and equal society.

Lineke van Tricht is an ECHA-specialist in gifted education and owner of Bureau Talent. As a former secondary schoolteacher and administrator she decided to dedicate her work life to gifted education. In 2008 she started Bureau Talent and since then she has worked with students (10 – 18 years old), their schools, schoolboards and authorities on improving gifted education.

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Creating equal opportunities at school

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¹ UNICEF Office of Research (2017). Building the future: Children and the sustainable development goals in rich countries. Opgehaald van https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/RC14_eng.pdf

² Inspectie van het Onderwijs (2016). De staat van het onderwijs [Onderwijsverslag 2014/2015]. Opgehaald van <https://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/documenten/publicaties/2016/04/13/staat-van-het-onderwijs>

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⁴ <http://www.realproject.org.uk/>

From Stereotyped to Balanced: Changes in Public Images of Gifted Education in China

SHENGPENG HUANG AND
YAN KONG, CHINA

While giftedness research can be a pure academic enterprise, the practice of gifted education is deeply involved with social realities and thus has to take public support into account (Troclair & Karnes, 1997). Negative images of gifted programmes among media reports, such as the myth-stereotypes like *mad genius and early ripe, early rot* are widely considered to be harmful to the development of gifted education (Baudson, 2016; Solano, 1987). But recent changes in public images of gifted education in China have provided insights in how gifted programme organizers can proactively reverse the gloomy situation.

Gifted education in China started in 1978 with the form of acceleration programme called Special Class for the Gifted Young (SCGY, see Dai & Steenbergen-Hu, 2015). It is the time when the nationwide chaos called Cultural Revolution just came to an end, and the government was faced with a problem that most scientific institutes in China had great staff shortages. In such a circumstance, fourteen top-notch Chinese universities, first the University of Science and Technology of China (USTC), then Peking University, Tsinghua University and others, established their own gifted programme with the support of national policy during the 1980s. All these programmes aim to identify students with high abilities and cultivate them to be qualified scientists. There was once a common saying *Training talents early, training talents quickly*, which reflected the urgent needs of gifted education. Specifically, students under the age of 16 who had fulfilled the criterion of a college education could be admitted to the universities based on their performance in both national college entrance examinations and a series of self-designed tests.

Soon after birth of the SCGY, it attracted newspapers' interest, especially with

the newsworthy stories about how a particular young student released his/her talents on the college campus or reached outstanding achievements after graduation from the programme. To empirically examine its public images, we collected 1,486 Chinese newspaper articles about the SCGY between 1978-2015, then applied semantic network analysis and content analysis to uncover the distributions of topics.

The SCGY did not fail the expectation of being the cradle of success. It was reported that the participants of SCGYs were more likely to attain a master or doctor degree compared to normal college students. Moreover, typical gifted students who had illustrious accomplishments at a young age received great praise from the media. Most early reports attributed such achievements to the participants' high intelligence. Thus before the year 2000, the dominant images of gifted education in media reports were "successful graduates" (33.3%) and "superb intelligence" (44.4%), forming an initial stereotype about gifted education, the chosen ones.

But just like what had happened in public opinions of western countries, controversies about gifted education began to arise around the turn of the century. During the period of 2000-2007, the participants of SCYGs were sometimes described to bear heavy psychological pressures or even suffer from mental problems. In this period, except for "successful graduates" (36.8%) and "superb intelligence" (32.5%), the image of "early ripe, early rot", which is correspondent with a Chinese allusion that *farmers cannot pull the seedling to speed up its growth*, was frequently mentioned in media reports (32.5%). The SCGY, on the one hand, is kind of an education trial, which had its own deficiencies indeed in the dimensions of programming and teacher guidance in the early stage. On the other hand, the rare cases of failure of high ability youngsters seemed to be more dramatic than merely speaking of their destined success. More surprisingly, the image of "successful graduates" is significantly

positively related to its opposite, the image of "early ripe, early rot" ($r = 0.189, p < 0.001$), indicating the complex attitudes towards gifted programmes in the Chinese society. It is also noteworthy that there is a positive correlation between "early ripe, early rot" and "superb intelligence" ($r = 0.145, p = 0.002$). This is the Chinese version of the mad genius stereotype.

The year 2008 was a turning point in the evolution of public images of gifted education in China. After 2008, all the previously mentioned images became much less prominent among newspaper reports, while articles providing neutral information occupied the biggest percentage (71.3%). At this point, many SCGYs had been stopped under the impact of negative public opinions, and the remaining ones began to seek for change. It is the year that the SCGY at USTC celebrated its 30th anniversary. The university decided to open its gate, welcoming the media for reporting its SCGY and the participants for the first time. Since then, all the SCGYs proactively share their information with the media to break the traditional stereotypes and form a more multi-dimensional image of gifted education. At the same time, after focusing on the cultivation of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics) talents for years, both the nation and the public started to realize that it is more important to fully develop the gifted individual's own nature. Athletic and artistic education earned higher value judgements than before in the national education policy as well as public opinions, leading to a newly emerged image of gifted education, "all-around development" (9.1%), which is found negatively related to the image of "superb intelligence" ($r = -0.370, p < 0.001$).

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The changes in public images of gifted education in China has shown that the national educational policy played an important role in the progresses of both shaping and removing stereotypes about gifted programmes and their participants. It is also suggesting that an open and cooperative attitude towards the media can help gifted programmes to earn more understanding and a better reputation, which is worth further exploring in the future studies.

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The 25th Round Table on Giftedness in Vršac, Serbia

BLANKA BOGUNOVIĆ, SERBIA

The previous news from Serbia were concerned with a good example of educational practice with the gifted in several domains (Bogunović, 2017). This time the news will refer to a scientific conference, the 25th International Round Table on Giftedness (RTG) in Vršac (28th of June, 2019), its headlines and outlines of conclusions or, we may say, incentives for further discussion on the delicate theme regarding the mesh network of the needs of the highly able and the needs of society.

Short timeline overview

The RTG started some 25 years ago (in 1995) after the initiative of a group of enthusiasts - professors from the Preschool Teacher Training College "Mihailo Pavlov" (PTTC) in Vršac¹, and while lasting this long, it became an important place for scholars and practitioners from the region of the Western Balkans who had a chance to meet each other, but also international participants and keynote speakers. Co-organizers were, e.g. universities and associations from Romania, Slovenia, Macedonia, England, Hungary and the Serbian poets' society. The manifestation owes its continued existence to the vision, ideas, knowledge and firm persistence of its main originator and organizer Prof. Dr. Grozdanka Gojkov. For many years, it was the only conference on giftedness in Serbia.

The core idea of the RTG is to join together scientific, educational and practical endeavors in different domains of giftedness with the goal of reinforcing research orientation in approaching diverse issues in gifted and talented development and education, to support new and advanced educational practices in working with gifted children and youngsters, which will in turn be applied in their own curricula at PTTC. The next goal was to build up the network among researchers from the region and the wider

scientific community, which succeeded to a great extent and now RTG represents the nest for an exchange and the emergence of new ideas and practices. Up to now, RTG have had over 1500 participants, more than 1000 presentations and almost 30 thematic monographs that followed each RTG, with a strong significance and influence in the states of the former Yugoslavia. The RTG was growing and developing along with the world's latest knowledge and initiatives.

Thanks to these activities, PTTC is now certified as a *European Talent Point*, as a part of *European Talent Support Network*. Also, the PTTC was a participant in the European comparative study on the early identification of giftedness, organized by Huerta del Rey (Spain) Research Centre for the Gifted. More practice related projects were: *Gifted children and relevant adults in the region of south Banat and Timish and Education of preschool teachers and teachers for the identification and work with gifted children*.

Round Table on Giftedness (RTG) policy

One of the basic ideas of the RTG is that gifted and creative individuals cannot find their way on their own in order to fulfil their potentials, unless they get support from the closer and/or wider environment. So, it was expected that scientific and professional knowledge condensed at and around RTG will have a chance to raise awareness and influence defining beneficial social policies for the gifted. Therefore, the special attention, through a conference's main topics, was given to an investigation of factors that could give an incentive and support for the development of giftedness and creativity, with respect for cultural diversity. Themes of the conferences were changing from early identification and development of giftedness; from preschool to student population with a special emphasis on the place of the gifted in society; factors that influence development; social and family support for the gifted; placement of the gifted in society when they grow

up, as well as methodological problems of researching giftedness.

The important inference as a result of numerous research results and discussions in the course of the years is that a small number of gifted individuals managed to overcome all the obstacles that they faced and personal developmental crises, if not being supported by an "environmental optimum". The inborn excellent potentials, as well as the intensive and persistent training and education pursued by gifted individuals, are not enough.

Round Table on Giftedness (RTG) 2019

Hence, this year, the special edition of the Round Table on Giftedness had a challenging theme - **Complexity of giftedness and creativity phenomena** - Challenges: The individual and society. The keynote speakers were Prof. Dr Roland Persson from Jönköping University, Sweden (*Challenges of the basis of giftedness and talent education*) and Dr. Zora Krnjaić from the Institute of Psychology, University of Belgrade (*Hobby potential for positive youth development and wellbeing*).

In her opening address Prof. Dr. Gojkov presented her reflections, focusing on world trends in the treatment of giftedness and creativity from the angle of relations between the individual and society². She expressed the opinion that gifted individuals on their way to self-realization, carried by their destiny in vast idiographic diversity while trying to reach superior performances, have a feeling

of vagueness and uncertainty. Namely, nowadays, giftedness and creativity development are part of the function of economic prosperity, and the role of the gifted is to support the national and/or global economy. Another question was raised: to what extent does society, as well as economy, relying on the profit of ideology, take into consideration the needs and interests of individuals, in this case gifted individuals? What are their interests, and how do the relations between economy and society go along towards the encouragement of creativity and giftedness, which should be a benefit for both an individual and society? In addition to the discussion, Prof. Persson pointed out that the general ambition of the world economy to make every effort to harness talent worldwide for economic growth is an impossible one with little or no support in objective empirical research³.

The participants of the RTG tried to find the "reconciliation" and "balancing" approach between the demands of society and economy in relation to the complex nature of giftedness and creativity. Also, the question was raised whether education achieves to fulfil the wide range of needs that talented youngsters have, and does it equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for integration in professional and life streams. It seems that the creativity of the gifted is constantly challenged by the necessity to integrate their gifts into a realistic setting. At that point, the issue between the relation "gifted individual – society" is burdened with another problem and that is, the domain of giftedness. Namely, some

talents are more economically interesting than others, so the question is then – are they less worthy? The RTG 2019 opened questions that ask for complex answers.

In the conclusion remarks of the conference it was pointed out that the issue of giftedness and creativity is for now still an "arena" for all scientific fields, in which all those induced by the phenomenon search for new approaches, in order to get closer to the answers to old questions and open new ones, thus meeting their needs for exploration and serving the gifted, being honorable in a social context.

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¹ <http://www.uskolavrsac.in.rs/>

² <http://www.nauka.uskolavrsac.in.rs/25-okrugli-sto/>

³ http://www.nauka.uskolavrsac.in.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Keynote_Persson_EN.pdf

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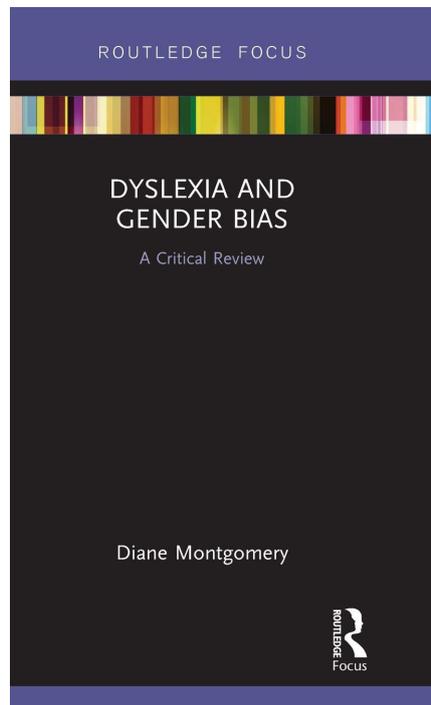
ANNETTE HEINBOKEL, GERMANY

Diane Montgomery is a well-known expert on everything that has to do with spelling and dyslexia, especially in regard to gifted children, and on double exceptionality. Earlier in 2019 she received the Lifetime Achievement Award, "given to an individual who has had a positive and ongoing impact on the provision of education and support of children and young people with high learning potential or dual or multiple exceptionality".

Her new book deals with the development of different methods that help children with reading and spelling problems, and with the impact that women have had on developing programmes for dyslexic persons to help them learn to read and to spell.

At the end of the 19th century, what is called 'dyslexia' today was first called 'word blindness'. In the beginning men dominated the scene, as women were not allowed to study at university. In Britain, Cambridge accepted women onto its degree programme in 1928. Women had the same problems everywhere. In Terman's well known longitudinal study, which was begun in 1925, only men were followed into careers, because the women had 'disappeared'.

In the beginning women who wanted to work very often went into teaching, and some of them became aware of difficulties with reading and spelling, sometimes in their own children. At first the field of dyslexia was dominated by Samuel T. Orton in the United States. There were close connections between the United States and Britain, made easier because of a common language. Over time different people – often women – changed his ideas and developed their own programmes. Montgomery names some of the pioneers: Anna Gillingham and Bessie Stillman, Marion Monroe, Sally Childs, Marion Welchman and Edith Norrie, the latter a Danish dyslexic. Norrie was so ashamed she was unable to read her fiancé's letters that she devised her own system and later founded the Word Blind Institute in



Montgomery, Diane (2019). *Dyslexia and Gender Bias – A Critical Review*, Routledge, Abingdon

Copenhagen. Time and again Montgomery writes about women who developed a successful programme to teach dyslexics, but 'unfortunately did not have a male authority to promote her' (Fernald, no first name, p. 37).

Montgomery describes the different methods, gives examples of typical mistakes children make that are most interesting for teachers who come across dyslexics in their everyday work. The question is if these methods work the same in other languages or if they can be adapted.

In the final chapter she deals with the problem of gender bias and the achievements of women in developing programmes. The work of women was often devalued because of subliminal prejudice. This may be less the case today, but it still exists, in some countries more than in others.

Theoreticians and researchers in the male-dominated ivory towers of academia can be divorced from the clinical experience of dyslexia. They can also be observed



promoting and endorsing the work of other men whilst diminishing the contribution of women peers and competitors. (...)

(...) Men still need to repeat what women colleagues have proposed, even at dinner parties it seems, in order for it to be accepted by others in the group. Some men appear to regard what any woman says as some kind of competition that needs to be suppressed and may even engage in scurrilous rumour mongering against them in the 'locker room'. (...)

The three models frequently used by researchers to explain why women have not yet achieved equality still appear relevant. These are: The Women's Place model - women's lack of representation in important roles in careers is a result of social norms. The Discrimination model - institutional patterns are a result of the efforts of one group to exclude participation of another. The Meritocracy model - that assumes the most competent people have been appointed and thus women are not competent. (p. 98/99)

One reason why the achievements of women quit often are not, cannot be known are the APA rules on how to quote authors in the references: only the initials of authors must be used. In the references Montgomery sticks to the APA rules: which of the authors are women? - Especially in older texts it is often impossible to know, even to find out if the author is female or male. That is why I always ask those who contribute to ECHA News to quote first and surnames. In my opinion the men (sic!) made rules should be changed in this respect.

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