



# ECHA NEWS

EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR HIGH ABILITY

AUTUMN 2021

## President's message

### Dear ECHA Members,

About a month ago, we said goodbye to each other on the last day of the 17th International ECHA Conference. Our Portuguese colleagues were brave enough to persist in organizing it, although that was a big challenge for them. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. Was everything perfect? Of course not. Like in any conference, things went wrong, in this case, obviously, there were some technical problems. But remember earlier conferences: laptops or beamers that didn't work, rooms that were too small, too warm, too cold, dirty bathrooms, a lack of coffee (the worst!), a lack of food, or vile food. So frustrating when it happens, but afterwards you laugh about it, or you turn it into learning moments.

Conferences are important for ECHA: our members live all around the world, and conferences are a way to meet each other and learn from each other. Apart from all the disadvantages, the advantage of the pandemic we are still in, is that we learned to meet each other also online, although many would say (and I'm one of them): that's not the same. But think of those people who are unable to travel; they had a chance now to be present at our conference.

ECHA is an organization that promotes the development of talents, which means that an important topic is learning. I sincerely hope that we did learn during the last two years, and that we don't forget what we learned, to improve education and care and support talent development even better than we did before the pandemic. After we had the online thematic conference, wonderfully organized by the colleagues in Budapest, the 17th

International ECHA Conference was our first online general conference. I feel deep respect for how our Portuguese colleagues didn't give up in these difficult times, and gave us all the opportunity to enjoy, learn and be inspired by wonderful keynote speakers and very interesting sessions.

About a decade ago, I was a little bit worried about the ECHA conference; what I saw was more and more an 'old boys network' (and yes, I am aware of the political incorrectness of this term, and yes, there were women too); everybody seemed to know each other, everybody liked or even loved each other, and everybody told each other how wonderful they were. It felt like a comfort blanket. But what I missed: young people, young researchers, who dared to defy the experienced researchers and professionals.

I'm so happy that this changed in the past years: I listened to many young researchers during the conference: talented, enthusiastic researchers, studying a variety of topics, collaborating with older, more experienced colleagues. Please continue your research; we need it. Support each other, and share your findings. Again, we need those findings to improve education, support and care for high ability people.

Other young people were present at the Youth Summit, parallel to the conference. We need them too, because they know what they, and their agemates, need. We need their help to support them in the way it works for them.

Various themes in the area of high abilities came up during the conference, like the

importance of mentorship, teachers, parents or renowned scholars, like in the GlobalTalentMentoring project, presented by Heidrun Stoeger. We found out that we should have more attention for gifted adults, for girls and women, and for less privileged talented people, less privileged because of a less favourable background, or because they have another challenge, the so called twice exceptional people. We heard about other than cognitive talents, like music, sports, and the arts. I would like to invite you to consider to start a Special Interest Group about the specific topic you are working in. You can find more information on the ECHA website. During the conference, many of us struggled about the definition of giftedness. I would say: let's keep struggling, because nothing is as dangerous as labels, casted in stone.

For three days we were inside the virtual walls of the conference; a safe and warm place, with people who believe what we believe, who want to improve the education, work and life of people with high abilities, which doesn't mean that we always agree: and we shouldn't; we need to be critical, on what others say, and especially on what we believe ourselves. We found possible future partners, as Elisabet Melroth from Sweden described she did in an earlier conference, which lead to a joint publication with Gabriel Bronstein from Israel. Some people found soulmates and, as happened in earlier conferences, you might have found friends for life.

After three days in that safe place, we had to return to the real world, where it might be chilly, where not everybody believes in what we do, not because they

are bad people, but because they lack knowledge, don't understand, or they are afraid, and sometimes, unfortunately, are even hostile about our attention for people with high abilities.

I hope you were inspired by what you heard during the conference, and that you feel the responsibility to use that knowledge, also when it is difficult. And if you are new in this area: don't be afraid to wiggle a little (I stole that expression from Dr. Beljan); eventually you will walk. And if you are already very experienced: it wouldn't be bad to wiggle now and then and reconsider what you know (or think you know) and believe. And don't forget; you are not alone. Many presenters mentioned the importance for high ability people to be seen; let's see each other. Use the contacts you made. Use the ECHA community. To quote a favourite proverb of our former president Peter Csermely: "If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together". We still have a long way to go, so let's do it together.

I expressed my joy about the young people in the conference, but I also want to express my joy about the presence of those who are not that young anymore: like Prof. Joan Freeman. We need people

like her, who have strong beliefs of what needs to be done, and have the courage to go for it, even when it is frightening, even if you have to bend (or even break) the rules a little (she only did this for the benefit of all of us). And one of the things that struck me, talking with her, was her continuing curiosity. Curiosity means that you are still open for learning, open for change, and that's what we need, in general, and also in the area of high abilities.

Gelaye Debebe, one of the speakers in the conference, said in her presentation about leadership: How can I inspire others if I am not inspired myself? This conference was a possibility to get inspired, to continue with and improve our work.

And then, to quote a parent of a gifted girl, mentioned by Rhoda Myra Bascal in her interesting presentation: If you dream it, believe in it, and work hard for it: anything is possible

So, I hope the conference inspired all of you who participated.

We are back in the world outside the virtual walls of the conference now. Let's improve it, in Howard Gardner's words:

let's do the right thing. And let's keep in touch and see each other again at the next ECHA conference in The Hague.

**Lianne Hoogeveen**, President of ECHA

Contact: [lianne.hoogeveen@ru.nl](mailto:lianne.hoogeveen@ru.nl)

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## Editorial

**ANNETTE HEINBOKEL, GERMANY**

This issue of ECHA News again contains interesting articles. A thank you to all the contributors.

First of all it is with great sadness I had to read that Johanna Raffan passed away. I have known her for many years and I admired her many achievements. Working together with her was a pleasure.

Because of Covid 19 many conferences these days take place online. In March 2021 the 2nd Thematic ECHA Conference: 'Closing the Achievement Gap in Gifted Education' took place in Hungary. About 700 people registered. And in September there was the ECHA conference, which originally should have taken place in Porto, Portugal, in 2021. There are reports on both conferences.

We are lucky. Technology has developed in a way that online conferences are possible; ten years ago this would not have been the case. Online conferences are a valuable replacement for the real thing. It allows people to take part who can perhaps afford the conference fees but not the additional costs of travel and accommodation. Not everybody gets money from a university or another institution. So maybe in the future conferences will take place in both forms simultaneously - online and offline.

Colm O'Reilly describes how they used online teaching in Ireland when schools were closed and meeting in person was not possible because of the virus. 'The

pandemic created a unique opportunity for some programmes to move from face-to-face delivery to a digital format.'

On the other hand, I prefer 'real' conferences: meeting real people, having a real coffee with them in a real room. These meetings, on purpose or by chance, offer excellent opportunities, especially for those who know much about gifted education and for whom personal meetings are very important. They are hardly possible in a virtual world. There was a very well organized conference in spring 2021. It was possible to meet individual participants in a break-out room – but the system only allowed five minutes each time. Participating in a virtual conference can mean not only switching off the micro but also the video and doing something else while listening. How many virtual participants have not done that yet?

Ulrike Kempter and Ramona Uhl deal with gifted youngsters in vocational training. That is an aspect that has been missing in gifted education. There are people who are 'good with their hands'. If that is combined with the ability to think, to plan, to look forward, that is an asset in every society. Every one of us regularly has to deal with people who repair our cars or our dishwashers, who lay the bricks for our houses and build the roofs. And we have all experienced that the quality of the workers and their work can be very different.

I have got a tiny garden, and a few years ago I wanted to have it done up properly, parts of it paved, new plants. I found a gardener and discussed my ideas with her. When we

were both happy with the plan, she sent me a young man and two assistants to carry out the work. During our talks in the coffee breaks it turned out that he had attended a school for children with learning difficulties, the concept of 'inclusion' did not exist then. He grew up in a disadvantaged area of the large town and saw his first body when he was about 12. But even at that age he knew which boys at school would make good friends and which he'd better avoid. He left school without a proper qualification. He did work placement with this gardener, and he turned out to be an excellent worker. He turned up on time, listened when he was given instructions and carried them out as ordered. The gardener was so satisfied that she offered to give him proper training, even with the lack of school qualifications. When he did the paving in my garden he suggested that my idea for a pattern was not good, his idea was better, and he was right. He was not much good at reading, writing probably not either, but he taught himself bee keeping with YouTube videos.

How many children with practical intelligence get overlooked in schools, because the focus is maybe on sports, music, art, theatre, but apart from that exclusively on intellectual subjects?

**Annette Heinbokel, editor**

Contact: [annette.heinbokel@swbmail.de](mailto:annette.heinbokel@swbmail.de)

### IMPRINT

**Editor ECHA News**  
Annette Heinbokel

#### **Publisher**

ECHA News is published by the European Council for High Ability

#### **Layout**

Dicks Werbeagentur  
49134 Wallenhorst · Germany  
[info@dicks-werbeagentur.de](mailto:info@dicks-werbeagentur.de)

#### **Copy ECHA News**

Please send contributions to:  
Annette Heinbokel  
Bismarckstr. 100  
28203 Bremen Germany  
Phone: +49 421 69675131  
[annette.heinbokel@swbmail.de](mailto:annette.heinbokel@swbmail.de)

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The Journal of the European Council for High Ability  
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#### **Published by:**

Carfax Publishing,  
Taylor & Francis Ltd.  
Customer Services Department  
Rankine Road  
Basingstoke, Hants RG24 8PR,  
UK  
[www.carfax.co.uk/has-ad.htm](http://www.carfax.co.uk/has-ad.htm)



## Obituary

# Johanna Raffan

It is to the loss of us all that Johanna Raffan has died. She was a rock in our field of the highly able. In her school role and beyond, she was actively involved in promoting special education for them over about 40 years.

Johanna's particular strength was as a strong and consistent force in helping the able child in the normal school; her contributions and achievements have been distinct and valuable. In spite of her initial heavy work-load heading her primary school, along with several of her teachers she developed and had published enrichment learning materials for able children in normal schools. She continued in this aim across years of fighting cancer and the sudden loss of her beloved husband Sandy.

Her interest in the most able began in 1972. But when she was upgraded at speed to her third primary headship just five years later, she grabbed the opportunity to put her creative ideas into practice. Just a year later, she became part of the new government supported Schools Council project, Gifted Pupils.

Johanna was a very practical person who simply got on with whatever work and responsibility she accepted to the best of her ability. It was a big part of her down-to-earth personality. She was a practising Christian with regular involvement and learning in her church.

Another of Johanna's major lasting achievements was her contribution to the National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE). In the UK, it remains the primary establishment for professional teacher training. At about the same time as ECHA was formed in 1989, NACE opened its first office and Johanna was elected its second President. In that role, she raised the association from 'merely' a group of enthusiastic teachers to an effective pressure group of international standing.

It was largely due to Johanna that NACE obtained a large grant of from the Department for Education to set up a network of schools in England and Wales which was working to improve the education of their most able children. This has been remarkably effective.

While Johanna was Director of NACE, from 2000 to 2010, she firmly tied the link between our associations by becoming Secretary of ECHA, taking over from Dr. Harald Wagner. She was at the same time on the three-person Executive of ECHA and at the same time a Delegate to the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children. She brought her practical influence to all she did, notably in running courses and conferences across Europe for teachers of the most able.

Johanna's promotion of NACE is still very effective, certainly improving the education of the most able children in the UK. The Association has set up many hundreds of Continual Professional Development (CPD) sessions for teachers.

In her involvement with the ECHA Diploma, Johanna brought together her long experience of teaching, running schools and inspiring teachers. She was able to enhance professional educational training and status for teachers which was not always available elsewhere in Europe at that time.

But there was more. She spent five years as Adviser for Talented Education to the Government of Madeira, ten years as Consultant on More Able and Talented to the Welsh Government and did extensive work in Denmark and Norway (where her mother was from).

Her immense contribution to the field was recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours list of June 2013 with the award of an MBE, Member of the Order of the British Empire. This is given for a significant achievement of outstanding service to the community.

Johanna was Vice-President and Secretary, as well as a Fellow of The College of Teachers (UK) and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. She was also the European President of Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland which helps women in the professions. In such a variety of areas, her contributions and achievements were distinct and effective and have been recognised at the highest levels.

I am very glad to have had the privilege of knowing Johanna and to count her as a good friend for very many years.

**Prof Joan Freeman FBPS**

*Founding President ECHA*

Contact: [joan@joanfreeman.com](mailto:joan@joanfreeman.com)

# Fostering highly able apprentices

**ULRIKE KEMPTER & RAMONA UHL,**  
AUSTRIA

## Introduction

Thinking of high ability is still mainly connotated with academic domains referring to intellectual ability/performance/excellence or to domains like music, the arts and sports. In these fields research-based data are numerous. But when it comes to vocational training or professional talents research is comparatively sparse.

The topic, however, was already brought up by Colson (1982) asking, "Vocational education: Can it serve the gifted?" Based on the Munich High Ability Test Battery, Ziegler & Perleth (1997) developed a model which showed the factors decisive for developing professional (talent) disposition into excellent performance. And Stamm (2006) presented a Swiss longitudinal cross-section study on the courses of training of particularly gifted young people in the professional education system.

## Vocational education

Switzerland, Germany and Austria have a widely renowned so called "dual educational system" where youngsters who have finished their compulsory education can decide between further/higher school education or vocational training. Having decided in favor of becoming an apprentice their training is split into partially vocational school time and a training at their workplace where they have a special instructor.

As the school leaving certificate of applicants for apprenticeship still matters a lot with many employers the group of youngsters who have their strong points in other than academic fields of school subjects are very often misjudged. They may come up with bad marks in their certificates and lack of learning motivation or are labelled "underachievers". The reason for all this is however not necessarily lack of intelligence but rather misfitting. They often practice their

talents in their leisure time repairing things, engaging themselves in voluntary work for non-profit organizations or clubs etc. – which is of no importance in school and is therefore not highly valued even by the youngsters themselves. It is "just a hobby". Sometimes they even hide their talents and consequently are not detected by teachers and/or employers. Thus, identification seems to be the keyword. But this is not so easy because experts in high ability research see the need of taking into consideration that every profession has its own demands of abilities which have to be taken into account when fostering professionally highly able youngsters. There are quite a number of tests available for young people to find the "right" place of training to go with their interests and talents.

But having found out about one's talents and a matching workplace does not automatically guarantee high performance. Schmitz & Zimmermann (2011) published an interim report on a German programme ("Durchstarter") for the identification and fostering of talented apprentices. This programme focused on underachievers during their time of training. Results showed that the professionally talented demonstrated their intelligence rather in practical / hands on areas than in academic ones. Their motivation to achieve was high as well as their readiness for initiative - provided that those talented apprentices were high achievers at the same time. And that was the crucial point: Without coaching and training in personality traits underachievers rarely became high achievers.

## The role of instructors

As a conclusion the Institute of Professional Education at the University of Teacher Education in Upper Austria started training for instructors and vocational teachers (attending the courses together) to raise awareness in the field of gifted apprentices. There is great interest in training with companies, especially their personal department, with teachers and instructors who have been working with apprentices for years. Their focus of

interest has changed from developing programmes to support the youngsters just in their deficits to investing into their strengths. They are becoming aware of the importance of their role as facilitators. Though Watters (2010) did not interview apprentices but students in their first year of university about the mediation of teachers in career decision making, the results can be taken over for vocational teachers and their role for career decision like setting high expectations of students, being a good explainer of complex ideas. The success of the best way of fostering professional talents of professional talents can be proved by international competitions for skilled workers like the "World Skills", "EuroSkills" or the nationwide competitions which raise "the profile and recognition of skilled people and show how important skills are in achieving economic growth" (<https://worldskills.org>). Countries with a dual educational system are among the top ones every year.

## Talent detectives – a tool

In order to help instructors develop support programmes for highly able/talented apprentices, the authors of this article (Uhl & Kempter, 2020) developed a tool for them to become aware of the strong points of their apprentices who are in training. The "Multidimensional and Multi-perspective Observation Tool for Vocational Potential" is handed out to the instructor as well as the apprentice him/herself, maybe the employer and/or the parents. Comparing the results of the self-assessment (of the youngster) and that of the instructor at the workplace, eventually also of one or the other teachers in vocational school or others – with focus on the strengths! – may help to develop an individual support system. As the aim of the tool is definitely not to improve "weaknesses" or "deficits" but empowerment in areas hence not detected as gifted the tool has to have a holistic perspective. Although the field of practical intelligence is by far not as

much accepted as the one of academic intelligence the authors think it important enough for vocational/professional giftedness (Uhl & Kempfer, 2020).

The tool helps to observe and assess the following areas:

- Personal data involving questions about voluntary work, language capacities (especially with minority groups)
- Competencies
- Thinking and learning preferences  
This area seems to be of eminence as far as the evaluation of the tool has shown up to now. The knowledge of one's way of thinking is essential for the choice of instructors matching the needs of the learner. "Practical" thinkers have proved to respond best to demonstration and examples rather than theory and analysis. Inventors think differently from those who do repair work. So different professions need different thinkers (Crawford, 2011).
- High sensitivity  
The tool also includes the aspect of high sensitivity which is hardly ever taken into account when it comes to high ability, although for special professions this may be of great advantage (Wyrsh, 2016, 2020)
- Casuistics  
The skills of manual workers/craftsmen are assessed by a casuistic method that means that the description of a typical workplace situation of their profession is offered to them. Their reaction to this situation is assessed afterwards.  
In the end the apprentice, the instructor and others involved compare who sees the best results in which area and together (in a conference) they decide how to make use of the strengths of the young person – to the best of the gifted person and the company.

## Discussion

The tool is still in the test phase to collect more data. The first evaluation has shown that it is not easy for employers and/or instructors to look at the youngster in such a manifold way (Doppler 2020). It needs consultation among those involved in the training because everyone sees only part of the person in training or school. But the awareness of this fact alone has helped those who have tested the tool to appreciate giftedness and the needs in different areas. Through interviews with apprentices and instructors/teachers/employers the tool can and will be adapted to the different professional areas. It is work in progress – hopefully for the better of vocational education for the gifted.

**Ulrike Kempfer, Prof. Mag.** is freelance assistant at the Institute of Vocational Education, Applied University of Education Upper Austria, Focus of Work and Research: Fostering and Development of Talent in Vocational Systems; Member of the Educational Board of ECHA  
Contact: [ulrike.kempfer@gmx.at](mailto:ulrike.kempfer@gmx.at)

**Ramona Uhl, Mag. Dr. MBA** is Professor of Human Sciences and Didactics at the Institute of Vocational Education, Applied University of Education Upper Austria, Focus of Work and Research: Fostering and Development of Talent in Vocational Systems; Professionalism in Vocational Education; Simulation Gaming  
Contact: [ramona.uhl@ph-ooe.at](mailto:ramona.uhl@ph-ooe.at)

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# Creating equal opportunities at school: Empowering students from less-advantaged backgrounds through teaching academic language.

LINEKE VAN TRICHT & LIANNE  
HOOGVEEN, NETHERLANDS

Students from a less advantaged background, for example because of a low socio-economic status or a native language other than the language spoken in school, do not always fulfil their potential in terms of academic success. The project 'Creating Equal Opportunities at School: Empowering students from less-advantaged backgrounds through teaching academic language', co-funded by Erasmus+, contributes to bridging the gap between these students' current academic success and their cognitive talent by means of teaching the Dutch academic language in schools in the Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders).

In this article we share our experiences with setting up and carrying out a project such as this. All through our process we have been so fortunate to being inspired and advised by Ian Warwick of London Gifted & Talented, who set up the REAL<sup>1</sup> project in the UK. Because of this good practice we didn't have to re-invent the wheel, but we could build on available knowledge and expertise. We would like to give you a similar head start by using this article in your process to creating equal opportunities at your school(s).

## Why

Inequality in education is a problem in many countries. Prosperous countries like the Netherlands and Belgium belong to the 10 countries in the world where the socio-economic status has the largest impact on school success<sup>2</sup>. The socio-economic status is the position people have in society. Examples of indicators that are used to measure the socio-economic status are: the language spoken at home and the income, professional status and the educational level of their parents<sup>3</sup>. Inequality in opportunities means that background and socio-economic status, instead of cognitive or academic abilities, can determine academic success<sup>4</sup> to the

detriment of the learner. Language seems to play an important role in this<sup>5</sup>.

It is essential that schools, students and parents become aware of this problem. It is also important that they should know where to find and how to make use of the learning materials that are available to teach students 'school language', also called academic language. Many students have an apparent fluency in a language which masks severe gaps in their actual (especially academic) vocabulary. The purpose of this project is to improve the academic language skills of cognitively talented students from less advantaged backgrounds. It aims at increasing the chance that these students' academic success is in line with their potential because language is no longer a barrier, leading to growth in their motivation and self-confidence.

## Our mission statement:

This project will uncover and develop unseen cognitive talents of students from disadvantaged social groups by improving their academic linguistic strategies.

From a broad perspective, the end goal should be that the influence of socio-economic status on talent development, school results and school success will be diminished. This fundamental change will ultimately lead to a more diverse and equal society.

## How

A team was formed of various schools and experts from the Netherlands, Belgium and the United Kingdom, working together in

this project, benefitting from each other's experience and expertise. The schools, Rijswijks Lyceum / Van Vredenburg College and Zuider Gymnasium in the Netherlands, and Lucerna College and Stedelijk Lyceum Pestalozzi in Belgium, are experts on working with a very diverse population. LondonG&T advised and inspired us with their REAL project, aimed at learners of English as a foreign language as well as native born students for whom 'academic' English is essentially also a foreign language. Thomas More University of Applied Sciences developed an intelligence test that is less culturally biased and therefore suitable for our target group. The Radboud University has expertise on giftedness and Bureau Talent is expert on giftedness in secondary education.

As a team, we formulated two questions:

1. How can we identify gifted students from disadvantaged backgrounds?
2. How can we improve their language skills in order to improve their opportunities for success at higher education levels?

## What

1. How can we identify gifted students from disadvantaged backgrounds?

The first step in the Erasmus+ project is to select cognitively talented students from less-advantaged backgrounds through a culturally less biased test. The 10% to 20% best scoring students per school were invited to participate in the language

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.realproject.org.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> 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](https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/RC14_eng.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> 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-2014-2015>

<sup>4</sup> Onderwijs in Cijfers (2018). Eindexamens voortgezet onderwijs 2016/2017. Opgehaald van <https://www.onderwijsincijfers.nl/kengetallen/vo/leerlingen-vo/prestaties-eindexamens>

<sup>5</sup> Cameron, L. (2002). Measuring vocabulary size in English as an additional language. *Language Teaching Research* 6,2 (2002); pp. 145–173.

<sup>6</sup> Magez, W., Tierens, M., Huynegem, J. van, Parijs, K. van, Decaluwé, V., Bos, A. (2015). CoVaT-CHC Basisversie: Cognitieve vaardigheidstest volgens het CHC-model. Psychodiagnostisch Centrum en CAPvzw.

<sup>7</sup> Giezenaar, G., e.a. (2017). Wijze woorden. Woordenlijst Academisch Nederlands met idioom oefeningen. Intertaal.

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programme. There were two cohorts: the first one from November 2019 until March 2020; the second one from March until July 2021.

In our project we used the CoVaT-CHC<sup>6</sup>, an intelligence test that can be administered as a group screening and consists of verbal and non-verbal subtests. The non-verbal subtests were used to select the cognitively most able students. The verbal subtests were used to measure progress in language abilities.

## 2. How can we improve their language skills in order to improve their opportunities for success in higher education levels?

The selected students were invited to participate in the programme, consisting of an online programme to help them learn academic Dutch and small-group learning sessions with a teacher.

Teachers and experts worked together to compile a list of academic words, based on previously developed lists<sup>78</sup>, amongst others an academic wordlist developed

for newcomers in the Netherlands or Belgium who want to study at a university.

The online programme allows students to study and use the words on their own. The small-group learning sessions with the teacher are aimed at discussing and using the words. Playing with the new words and looking for the words in new contexts are also part of these lessons. The aim of the programme is that students 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 will be finalized in the autumn of 2021. In the next issue of ECHA News we hope to bring the results of the research. In meantime we are working on continuation of the project. Are you interested in participating? Please contact Lineke van Tricht: [lineke@bureautalent.nl](mailto:lineke@bureautalent.nl).

**Prof. Dr. Lianne Hoogeveen**, current President of the European Council for High Ability (ECHA), is Programme Director of the Radboud International Training of High

Ability (RITHA). She coordinates the master specialization 'Gifted Education' at Radboud University. As a mental health psychologist, she examines and counsels adolescents and adults with high abilities at CBO Talent Development in Nijmegen. As part of the Behavioral Science Institute (Radboud University), specifically in the research group RATiO she is involved in research on giftedness and education, cooperating with colleagues of Dutch and international universities.

Contact: [lianne.hoogeveen@ru.nl](mailto:lianne.hoogeveen@ru.nl)

**Lineke van Tricht** is founder and director of Bureau Talent, centre of expertise in the development of cognitive talent (10-18 years old). After having worked in secondary education as a teacher and school leader, she specialized in gifted education and took the training to become an ECHA-specialist in Gifted Education. At Bureau Talent, she leads several projects on gifted education, both nationally and internationally. Beside her work at Bureau Talent, she is a freelance teacher at the Radboud International Training of High Ability (RITHA).

Contact: [lineke@bureautalent.nl](mailto:lineke@bureautalent.nl)

## QUOTATION

# Advanced Placement is the best predictor of success at college

Susan G. Assouline

# 2nd Thematic ECHA Conference: 'Closing the Achievement Gap in Gifted Education'

Budapest 23-28 March 2021

**SZILVIA FODOR & CSILLA FUSZEK,**  
HUNGARY

The second thematic ECHA conference took place online on 23-28 March. Its co-organisers, MATEHETSZ – in particular the European Talent Centre Budapest – and Debrecen University spent months preparing for the event that has brought considerable international success.

The topic of the conference was the so-called school achievements gap. This was no accident: in Hungary, talent support provided to multiple disadvantaged children and the research of the relevant programmes from several aspects (psychology, sociology, education) looks back on a past of almost 22 years. The organisers believed the topic was of relevance both in Europe and globally, but they did not count on it becoming more topical than ever due to lockdowns/restrictions introduced to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

The conference that was to last for 1.5 days was therefore extended to 5 days, with no more than a daily 3 hours of "new materials". At lecture time, roundtable discussions started at 4 p.m. and lasted for a maximum of 3 hours, and they were repeated the next day in the morning to eliminate problems due to time differences. Three hours a day caused no difficulty to the participants, but feedback has shown that most could only join the conference on no more than 2-3 of the 5 days.

## Presenters

On Day 1 of the conference, after the opening, we welcomed **Prof. Márta Fülöp**, an outstanding representative of Hungarian psychology, who discussed competition/rivalry, her special research topic for quite some time, from the point of view of underprivileged gifted students.

After the presentation, Professor Fülöp logged in to answer questions. This topic provoked so many thoughts that she could not answer all the questions, so a special appointment was made with her: she logged in again on Day 4 of the Conference to provide exhaustive answers to all the questions.

On Day 2 of the Conference, participants could listen to two excellent lecturers. First to **Prof. Paula Olszewski-Kubilius**, teacher and researcher at Northwestern University, whose presentation focused specifically on best practices to support talents in a disadvantageous situation. The central concept of the researches concerned was the 'opportunity to learn', explaining the backlogs observable in the performance of underprivileged students.

The other lecturer of the Wednesday session, **Prof. Jonathan Plucker** (Johns Hopkins University), drew attention to the excellence gap in addition to the achievement gap, and also the opportunity gap underlying them. First he presented the research report "Mind the (Other) Gap" published in 2010, the first document to call attention to the substantial achievement gaps existing between student groups. This research inspired many further studies, and Prof. Plucker relied on their outcomes to re-interpret the original results from a perspective of 10+ years. Similarly to the previous presenters, he underlined the importance of appropriate talent identification practices, the necessity of having local norms, of teacher training and psycho-social skills.

The Thursday (25 March) plenary presentation was held by **Prof. Frank Worrel** (University of California, Berkeley), who was present in the capacity of university teacher and researcher and also as President of APA (American Psychological Association) and whose participation raised the prestige of the whole event.

He reviewed the efforts to further diversity the talent support programmes, underlining the under-representation of underprivileged students.

The last plenary session was that of **Prof. Péter Tibor Nagy** who discussed the sociological aspects of entering the groups of the social elite. The presentation focused on the social aspects of talent support to assess the chances of underprivileged students to be admitted to the stages of elite education and employment.

The conference had 36 lecturers. Hungarian colleagues made up 30 percent of the whole group. Other invited speakers came from all over the world, from India, Israel, Ethiopia, Kenya, the US, South America, Taiwan and the European continent was also represented by several countries in addition to Hungary, such as Greece, for example.

The combination of the presenters and the topic itself and the fact that conference participation could be offered free of charge thanks to the support of the Hungarian National Talent Programme resulted in what was an unprecedented number of registrations in the history of ECHA conferences: almost 700 registered. Another conclusion drawn from the relevant international experience is that a conference is successful if 50 percent of registered applicants actually log in. Data protection law does not allow to have exact data on the number of participants, but according to the estimates it was certainly up to around 50 percent.

*Szilvia Fodor, PhD, completed her MA studies in psychology and English and PhD studies at Debrecen University; she is associate professor at the Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest and a member of the advisory board of the European Talent Center in Budapest*

Contact: [szilvia.fodor.dr@gmail.com](mailto:szilvia.fodor.dr@gmail.com)

*Csilla Fuszek has been specializing in the field of gifted and talented education since 2000. As a managing director she worked for nationwide talent development programmes. She was a lecturer at Eötvös Loránd University from 2008 – 2016. Since 2009 she has been working for the Association of Hungarian Talent Support Organizations on nationwide talent support projects.*

Contact: [fuszekcs@gmail.com](mailto:fuszekcs@gmail.com)

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You can look at the lectures here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iOC5\\_kSWpA&list=PLMjxCVGGqMMJwapGs97bl2sk\\_9MQCP40x](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iOC5_kSWpA&list=PLMjxCVGGqMMJwapGs97bl2sk_9MQCP40x)

# Online learning: On a University Gifted Programme During CoVid19

COLM O'REILLY, IRELAND

I am delighted to be writing this article for ECHA News about the online work at my university during the CoVid pandemic. I recently gave a keynote with my colleague at Dublin City University (DCU), Professor Mark Brown at the conference for the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, where we discussed how new digital technology, when anchored in lessons from the research literature, can help educators transverse new places and spaces for authentic and meaningful learning, creating valuable opportunities to develop transversal skills for gifted students. Mark was very well qualified to do this as he was Ireland's first chair in Digital Learning and is currently the Director of the National Institute for Digital Learning at Dublin City University while I am the Director of CTY Ireland which is the largest gifted outreach programme in Europe and based at my university.

The COVID-19 crisis presented many challenges for parents and guardians of high ability students, with many gifted programmes cancelled. Despite their best efforts, homeschooling over 2020 resulted in significant numbers of gifted students not having their diverse needs adequately stimulated or challenged. However, the pandemic created a unique opportunity for some programmes to move from face-to-face delivery to a digital format.

Our university has had a history of online learning even before the pandemic. For 30 years DCU has had a history of distance learning and providing adult learners with flexible access to university education. This latterly grew into DCU Connected which allowed third level students borderless access to all the resources of an established university providing flexible access to accredited degrees and increased opportunities to connect to an international network of students. In April of 2020 when the pandemic started and the university was closed Mark and his colleagues designed a free online course for teachers called "How to Teach Online:

Providing Continuity for Students." This is available on the FutureLearn platform (<https://www.futurelearn.com/>) and to date 90,000 educators have accessed it.

Mark talked about the digital learning ecology and how we all had to adapt very quickly once we no longer had access to the traditional teaching tools that we are all familiar with over the years. This ecology works in four quadrants where we start with Students On Site and In Class and can move to On Site and Out of Class or Off site and In Class but we ultimately ended up in a situation where students and teachers were Off Site and Out of Class.

This is the scenario I faced last year when our government announced that all schools and universities would be closed for the foreseeable future. At the time I was managing a gifted programme every Saturday for 1,000 students who were attending classes in various locations around Ireland. We were half way through the term and we now had 50 classes that could not be hosted in any person location. I also had a lot of teachers working for me who had greatly varied levels of knowledge of online teaching and the skills involved in delivering these courses.

A quick scan through the literature in gifted education regarding digital learning revealed a huge shortage of articles on these topics. As early as 2004 Olszewski-Kubilius and Lee researched why gifted adolescents preferred online courses and reported a desire to learn more about a particular content area, a desire to study at their own pace or to get ahead and a desire for extra coursework that they could not fit into their regular school schedules. However very little follow up came out of that research. Periathiruvadi and Rimm (2012) talked about how technology was beneficial to gifted students from rural areas and how students can enjoy greater flexibility in online learning. Chen, Zai, & Dao (2013) wrote about how technology can improve gifted education in three ways. They believed it enables more people to participate, it enhances the quality of the material and allows a transformative new model of enquiry amongst students.

Latterly Van Tassel-Baska (2021) discussed the new learning tools that we can use with technology. Overall though this is definitely an area that needs more publication in our field and hopefully we will see more in the future as a result of this shift towards online learning in the pandemic.

Going back to the problem we faced at our organisation in March 2020, as platforms like Zoom and Teams were in their infancy we decided not to use them in our first efforts at running online courses. We were also unsure of what technology the students would have available to them at home and we didn't know what their internet connectivity would be like for them to attend a full class online. We decided to ask all our teachers to prepare two YouTube videos for one hour each and to make this content available to all of the students. We gave the staff some training how to make these videos and some used their phones to make the content while others used I pads, Macs and PCs. We made all the videos available to the students rather than just the videos for the classes they have signed up for before the university was closed. This proved to be a very good decision as a lot of parents had reported that their children were very bored at that stage having not received any online tuition from their schools. In all 100 hours of content was created and of course some were better than others but overall the feedback was positive. Most importantly it gave us a platform to decide what to do next.

For the next term we decided to use Zoom as the platform for the classes. At this stage most people had become well used to using Zoom either in a work context for meetings or as a social tool to connect with family and friends. As it was free to download we knew that this wouldn't create a problem and our university had purchased a professional licence for Zoom giving us access to longer times for meetings rather than the 40 minutes that were allowed for the basic version. This was necessary to run classes on the platform and the ease that screen sharing was allowed made it a useful tool to run online classes.

This term proved much more successful as all our staff were given a full training on Zoom before they started teaching. As it was a new term this enabled us to hire teachers who had more knowledge of technology and were more comfortable with online teaching. We also were able to

change times of classes to make it easier for students to access them and we shortened class times for younger students. Finally, we were able to pick subjects that were easier to teach online like Zoology, Psychology, Model United Nations and Graphic Design rather than traditional lab based subjects like Chemistry and Engineering.

The positives from these classes were that the students had much more interaction than we anticipated. They seemed to embrace the new technology and used the chat function for questions and engaged with the material shared on the screen. The teachers, too, surprised us by using extra online tools to make the classes more interesting. These included Phet simulations for physics and biology (<https://phet.colorado.edu/>) and kahoot interactive quizzes (<https://kahoot.it/>) to test knowledge of the material. Other tools used included Padlet (<https://padlet.com/>) for creative content and Edpuzzle (<https://edpuzzle.com/>) for making video content. Other improvements made over time were that at the start we tried too much to replicate the face to face experience which proved difficult. We had far more success in embracing online teaching and using the

advantages that the online teaching tools offer.

Following on from this and while we were still unable to have students on campus we got a lot of requests to run online social activities. We would find that on gifted programmes like CTYI the social experience of meeting other students like yourself and making new friends is equally if not more important than the academic benefits. We organised 90 minute after class online social activities and 60% of students participated. Some activities worked very well from a home setting including things like Pet Appreciation and Debating and feedback from students was that they felt less intimidated when they were performing at home that they typically would in person.

So what does the future hold? Well, we believe that the future for gifted education is with a hybrid model of face to face to teaching along with online components. We believe that while there will be a call to revert back to type that this would be a shame and that we should continue to cultivate the developments we have made with online learning.

Please feel free to contact me with any suggestions for how we can achieve this.

**Colm O'Reilly, Ph.D.**, is the Director of the Irish Centre for Talented Youth (CTYI) at Dublin City University. Colm has worked in the area of gifted and talented education for the last 20 years and has written articles and presented papers at numerous conferences around Europe and worldwide. He is currently the secretary of the European Council for High Ability and the treasurer for the European Talent Support Network.

Contact: [colm.oreilly@dcu.ie](mailto:colm.oreilly@dcu.ie)

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## Where are the girls?

Literature review on the underrepresentation of girls in gifted education

**MAAIKE H. GODDIJN**  
ECHA / RHITHA THESIS

### Waar zijn de meisjes?

Literatuurstudie naar de ondervertegenwoordiging van meisjes in het hoogbegaafdenonderwijs

Notwithstanding the consensus that both genders are equally gifted, girls are evidently underrepresented in gifted education. The present literature review describes the role of various internal and external correlational factors, such as selection methods for participation in gifted education, gender bias in teachers and misconceptions about giftedness in girls. Teachers' perceptions are emphasized as they play a key role in identification and selection for gifted education. In addition, an evaluation is conducted on to what extent gender roles

and socialization affect the self-concept and functioning of gifted girls and how perfectionism and underachievement are factors in participation in gifted education.

Literature shows that boys are more likely to be identified as gifted than girls eventually resulting in fewer girls participating in gifted education. Gifted girls' great ability to blend in combined with internalizing behavior and perfectionism contributes to their giftedness being regularly overlooked. Moreover, teachers' stereotypical ideas about giftedness and gender appear to hinder the identification and admission of girls to special programmes. However, when teachers do have more knowledge about giftedness, they actually make a positive contribution to the identification and selection process, especially when varying identification and selection methods are used.



Furthermore, socialization and stereotyped gender expectations have a major influence on the self-concept and functioning of gifted girls, eventually preventing them from participation in gifted programmes. In conclusion: there are various factors that hinder equal access for boys and girls to gifted education and more research is needed to ensure greater equity in gifted education.

Keywords: gifted education, girls, underrepresentation, gender bias, stereotyping, teachers, socialization

**Maaïke Goddijn** works as an educational adviser and specialist in gifted education at Het ABC (educational consultancy) in Amsterdam. Her focus is on hidden gifts and talents in girls and women. Furthermore, she is part of the programme team of the extracurricular enrichment programme *Day a Week School*. She is a RITHA Specialist in Gifted Education since June 2021 and since then a lecturer in the RITHA training.

Contact: [mhgoddijn@gmail.com](mailto:mhgoddijn@gmail.com)

## Early childhood talent development and equal opportunities

How ignorance shapes the social environment of gifted children

**MAG. AIKATERINI KARAGIANNI-SCHLEGEL**

DAS-THESIS, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE FOR TEACHER EDUCATION, LOWER AUSTRIA

The promotion of gifted people is discussed under consideration of theoretical knowledge, research results and practice-oriented scaffolding in the field of education. According to research results, giftedness should be understood as something dynamic, as potential that is seriously influenced by the interaction between the individual and the social environment.

Gifted Education as an exploration of starting positions and prospects must

also be viewed from a socio-cultural point of view. According to the results of studies in the sociology of education, the existing gap between the privileged and the underprivileged classes is not only visible from a financial point of view, but also from the level of education. Social and educational inequality influence and reproduce in a vicious circle with consequences for the individual and further for society. However, this knowledge should not become a selection mechanism and promote children of a certain class or a certain gender. Talent development should be available for every individual and should start as early as possible. The well-being of the individual, the satisfaction of his or her right to education and the development of one's own potential, is directly linked to the

common good. Thus, talent development is a political issue.

The thesis starts with a theoretical overview of models of giftedness. The next chapter deals with some diagnostic options for the identification of gifted children followed by literature based reasons for talent development during the pre-school age. The second part contains a structured analysis of problems gifted pre-school children have to deal with, followed by an outlook how the future of gifted preschool education could be.

Contact: [karagianni.katerina@gmail.com](mailto:karagianni.katerina@gmail.com)



## Learning-Motivation in the upper secondary level during the application of self-directed learning and work processes

**MAG. PHIL. KATRIN LANG**

DAS-THESIS, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE FOR TEACHER EDUCATION, LOWER AUSTRIA

Even though human beings tend to be inquisitive and proactive during their childhood years, certain aspects diminish this seemingly innate process of motivation once the individual ages. While the natural flow of motivation is highly present in children, particular factors slowly decline the original condition. The question which is most interesting to teachers and scientists alike is the solution for creating a form of motivation in students that

engages them and keeps them motivated as well as interested in their field of study.

This paper focuses on different scientific approaches to the term motivation and also mentions a variety of supportive methods and hindering factors which can influence young students during their school years. Additionally, a survey has been conducted among students of secondary education with regards to the new self-regulated learning environment all students had to face during the phase of distance learning. The questionnaire enquired after their learning methods, their learning environment but also focused on

factors which increased or decreased their self-motivation.

In conclusion, the findings of this research mostly correlate with aspects of the Self-Determination Theory through which students are able to regain their three most basic needs – competence, autonomy and relatedness. Most students described their new setting during the quarantine as predominantly positive and mentioned that by structuring their own learning process they received more self-control which encouraged them to stay motivated.

Contact: [KatrinLang@gmx.at](mailto:KatrinLang@gmx.at)




 Teachers'  
Corner

## Aspects in motivation research

**MAG. DR. HELGA FRANZ-HAASE**  
DAS-THESIS, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE FOR  
TEACHER EDUCATION, LOWER AUSTRIA

Understanding human behaviour unites scientists and educators. Closely related to this is the question of motivation. Motivation is defined as an internal state, which serves to activate a certain behaviour in order to achieve what is desired. The thesis deals with the problem of motivation development.

However, motivation is also one of the most important psychological concepts in the school context. Motivation research shows that motivation itself, especially learning

and achievement motivation, is related to various school-relevant aspects such as curiosity, perseverance and performance. The relevant importance for teachers, students, parents and science as a whole, is obvious (Franz-Haase, 2019, Theorien zur Motivationsforschung, 2019, S. 5).

The present work deals with relevant aspects in motivation research. At the beginning, selected aspects of motivation research are included and the development of the early striving for effectiveness, motivation, is examined in more detail. Subsequently, the development of action competence, the self-concept, the intrinsic motivation and the associated "flow" are presented. The subject areas "School" and

"Visible Learning" are dealt with in the subsequent chapters. The last section relates to the "challenges for learners and teachers" which are treated in the empirical part of this paper.

The present work aims at providing a basic overview of the aspects of motivation research and the development of motivation in different forms. The empirical section is intended to clarify how pupils can behave in exceptional situations (during the Covid-Crisis in 2019/20) and how they can benefit from this..

Contact: [helga.franz-haase@aon.at](mailto:helga.franz-haase@aon.at)

## Preparation for the preliminary rounds of the Informatics Olympiad in Vorarlberg

**DI (FH) RICHARD DÜR**  
DAS-THESIS, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE FOR  
TEACHER EDUCATION, LOWER AUSTRIA

The International Informatics Olympiad is the largest international programming competition for young people. Over 80 nations take part in the competition every year. Austria organizes multi-stage qualifications with the aim of sending four participants to the Olympics at the end of the day.

As part of the ECHA course 1, interested pupils and apprentices in Vorarlberg were jointly prepared for the IT Olympiad.

After the planning and selection of the participants had already been dealt with in a previous thesis (see DÜR, Vorbereitung auf die Vorausscheidungen der Informatik Olympiade in Vorarlberg. Planung und Teilnehmerauswahl, 2018), the present thesis describes the technical preparation.

In a theoretical part, competitions and especially the computer science Olympiad are discussed as an opportunity to promote talented people. Furthermore, the opportunities that digitization offers are highlighted, especially with regard to cooperation and practice on an individual level in the field of programming.

In the practical part of the thesis, the preparation for the preliminary rounds of the IT Olympiad is described using the example of a cross-school enrichment in Vorarlberg. The concept of preparation is presented, individual learning settings are reviewed in detail and workshops, themed evenings and conferences are debated as suggestions for additions. Finally, the results of surveys are discussed with the participants and teachers or trainers in the training companies.

At the end, the most important results are summarized, and an outlook is given.

Contact: [Richard.Duer@bws.ac.at](mailto:Richard.Duer@bws.ac.at)


 Teachers'  
Corner

## REPORTS BY NATIONAL CORRESPONDENTS OF ECHA

## Denmark National Report



**OLE KYED, DENMARK**

Contact: [info@olekyed.dk](mailto:info@olekyed.dk)

During a crisis like the recent Corona pandemic we very often see creative ideas emerging, and just as some people look at the obstacles others look at resources and possibilities.

We see a great impact on children's education just as the parents have been forced to change their daily life. In Denmark all children have experienced their school to be closed for long periods, and the education has been based on online education. This has had a great impact on their social life.

Unesco's advice in their "Education for All" programme was that we should base our education on four pillars: "To know – to do – to be – to be together". We can easily imagine how many children have missed to be in their learning environment where they can experience different ways of working together.

Among the gifted children we do see different ways of coping with their education and daily life. Some find it positive that they can go into depth in their home studies and concentrate on issues that matters. This morning I met a father who told me about his son, that I met some years ago having difficulties in his school. He has now won a talent competition in college and is getting top grades. He is now among the best performing in school. Together with a few other gifted he found a

successful way of spending his surplus time – developing a project that the technical university looks forward to continuing.

I also see children and youngsters who develop depression and anxiety with lack of initiative, and who "get lost in the social media". Many of the children who are successful are very often the ones coming from family backgrounds where they are cared for and feel supported, and where they learn to work independently, not only academically but also with daily activities.

Children need to feel they are supported and that they are important actors in their own daily life.

Although it has been difficult to meet physically, it has been possible to succeed with small research projects in Denmark with STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). The research has been based on formative evaluation. The main focus has been how to collect knowledge in order to plan the future education. The projects are further elaborated in a special issue of the Danish journal *Kognition & Pædagogik*, June 2021. The editor is my colleague Dr. Poul Nissen, with whom I have worked together for many years.

We have also established a Nordic university research network: (Denmark, Aarhus University, Sweden, Karlstad University, Norway, Oslo University, Finland, Helsinki University and Iceland, Reykjavik University). We are still at the beginning as we meet virtually.

From publishers we understand that many manuscripts are received for evaluation, and among these manuscripts I also see books on giftedness. I have written a foreword a couple of times to books focusing on social and personal development and also on more practical teaching materials etc.

Other initiatives to come are new private schools for gifted and a boarding school for young people (14-16 years) who are gifted and talented, and at the same time have special needs. These are all based on private initiatives and supported by funds, just as the scientific projects are supported by private funds.

The political focus from the Ministry of Education has been on broad and mainstream initiatives and the disadvantaged children (economic and social conditions).

Not only the kids and youngsters are happy with the newly opened sports facilities with possibilities to meet and see friends again. Also the older generation appreciates to be able to reestablish their social network through sports activities. At my morning swim I met an old friend (78 years) and we talked about our still active life. It seems that quite many in their 70's and 80's are still professionally active, and I hereby propose that not only do we make research among gifted children, but also among gifted seniors so that they can be qualified sparring partners (mentors) for the young people.

## National report - Germany



ANNETTE HEINBOKEL, GERMANY

Contact: [annette.heinbokel@swbmail.de](mailto:annette.heinbokel@swbmail.de)

The effects of the Covid 19 virus meant that schools in different parts of the country were closed at times. Teachers had to use online teaching or distribute instructions on paper. When the pandemic began, most schools in Germany were quite unprepared for this scenario. However, they learned a lot, matters have improved immensely. Children were provided with tablets, programmes for online learning were developed. Problems remained though, e.g. for families with several children living in a small apartment, and when the parents also had to work from home, or when they were unable to afford the fees for the provider.

The LemaS project – spending 125 million Euros on 300 schools in the space of 10 years - was also affected by school closures. The plan was that during the first phase (2018-2023), scientists together with schools develop concepts and strategies to assist teachers to discover their pupils' potential early and support them.

In previous issues of ECHA there were reports on homeschooling in European countries and world wide. Germany is one of the countries where homeschooling is strictly forbidden. Despite that, everybody, including all the media, during the closures of schools used the English expression 'homeschooling'. School authorities, however, preferred the expression 'distance education', to hide the fact that a lot of learning and teaching happened at home,

delivered by parents. Children, whose parents were educated, had an advantage. At the same time, if the parents were not well educated or were unable to speak German, their children lost knowledge and experience. And ALL the children missed their friends.

I am waiting for research into the effects of homeschooling on gifted children. First reports say quite a few enjoyed the freedom: they only needed maybe two hours for the tasks the schools sent instead of wasting hours waiting for their classmates (Maybe in the long run the LemaS project will change that).

My hope is that parents in Germany will rise up and demand that the laws forbidding homeschooling will be changed.

## Latest News on Talent Support in Hungary



CSILLA FUSZEK, ZSÓFIA PAPP & ÁDÁM SZÖÖR

Hungarian talent support has decades-long traditions in both public and higher education and in the civil sphere. The **National Talent Council** was set up on the basis of the relevant experience in 2006. Its establishment reflected that talent management had become a shared task assumed by the majority of society by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Furthermore, in addition to school-level talent management as specified in the Public Education Act, a more general social level, representing society overall and also ethnic Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin, has also appeared.

Council work resulted in the drafting of the **National Talent Programme (NTP)**, a national talent management strategy, approved by Parliament by consensus in 2008 for 20 years, together with its financial framework. The **Association of Hungarian Talent Support Organisations (MATEHETSZ)**, the operational NGO representing the Council, was set up in

the same year. One of the most important developments of the last few years was the emergence, alongside MATEHETSZ, of two state-supported institutions with competence over the entire Carpathian Basin: the **National Talent Centre (NTK) and the so-called Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC)**. The unique nature of Hungarian talent care and management is defined inter alia by these 3 organisations, to be discussed in detail below.

MATEHETSZ has been involved in the implementation of a number of projects supported by the European Union or by the National Talent Programme since its launch. It registers and connects, and represents in its Talent Map, the talent support programmes of the Carpathian Basin, and it has set up a network of as many as 1.400 Talent Points by now. In addition, it has played a significant role in the creation of the European Talent Support Network (ETSN), which brings together over 400 organizations.

In the last 5 years, almost 40.000 students participated in the programmes realised under the "Hungary of Talents" project of

MATEHETSZ, designed primarily to develop effective national support systems tailored to the individual needs of talented young people. One of its components, actually its flagship, is the so-called "tutor programme". One tutor (talent support professional) helps 8-10 talented youth assigned to him/her along their respective individual learning paths.

A total of **2.743 tutored young people received complex support under the programme, rolled out nationally between 2017 and 2021**. The mentor programme, with a more limited focus and volume, involving 70 volunteer mentors and almost half a hundred young people, focused in particular on professional development. In addition, more than 2.600 students were assisted under a scholarship programme and, in addition, 1.298 students could take part in a number of collective programmes, including several development programmes. The organisation is at the forefront of the country's accredited training courses for teachers in the field of talent development. Instead of subject-specific topics, they focus on competencies to assist teachers

identifying talented children, develop their individual curricula and provide out-of-school care. Teaching and educator staffs, specialised services staffs and tutors may also participate in further training.

The **National Talent Centre (NTK)** was established in 2019 and became a priority state-owned institutional actor in the field of talent support in Hungary. Its core task is to help identify young talents and support them. It also plays a community-building and mentoring role, conducts researches and implements professional programmes. A significant part of its activities is realised in the context of domestic and international financing projects. Nearly 155 staff, including teachers, mentors and training professionals, are involved in the work of the Centre.

The Centre has delivered services to tens of thousands of young talents, and it has delivered training courses for them and their support staff. Thirty-nine so-called Qualified Talent Workshops offering programmes to support highly talented students have been established in the country. The institution is implementing a number of programmes under the "Hungary of Talents" project.

The world's unique "**Stipendium Peregrinum**" scholarship programme helps talents aspiring at admission to the most prestigious universities based on their abilities and knowledge for a period of 2 years. Thanks to the scholarship programme, 17 Hungarian young people could start their studies at such universities abroad in the first year. This year, successful applicants have included 34 scholarship-holders, and 13 people who have already studied abroad and have applied with success again this year with this state grant. NTK organises a number of public tenders and their award ceremonies, including the "Bonis bona" and "Talent-friendly Government" awards for top talent care professionals, teachers, organisations and municipalities, as well as the National Secondary School Study Contest award event.

The Centre also organises alumni communities for the young beneficiaries of the National Talent Programme; supports the talent management of young Hungarians studying abroad, and helps them establish contacts with the actors of the domestic labour market. NTK supports the promotion of the "London Talent

Centre" project dedicated to events and training to contribute to the talent support of Hungarian youth living abroad. The initiative aims to build a link between young Hungarian talents in the UK and Hungary.

In August 2020, the Centre became the implementer of the so-called "**Snétberger**" programme; this was a significant milestone not only for domestic talent support, but also for the NTK itself. The Centre's activities have been complemented with a 12-week intensive music programme for Roma and disadvantaged young people. As a result, the NTK is the only talent support organisation that implements a complex programme offering also activities to help unfold and develop the musical talents of disadvantaged young people.

In 2021, the National Talent Centre organised the international conference "**Budapest Talent Summit**" (BTS), designed to introduce international delegates and professionals to Hungary's comprehensive talent management strategy, the globally unique National Talent Programme and its key elements and achievements. It will also consolidate the international relations of the NTK and provide an opportunity to present the outcomes of its dedicated work. The conference will involve internationally renowned professionals, diplomats, state leaders, winner talents involved in the NTP, mentors, instructors, artists and organisations.

In recent years, the Hungarian talent management palette has been complemented by **Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC)**, which became the biggest talent development institution in the Carpathian Basin in the past years.

Founded a quarter of a century ago on a private initiative, the institution initially focused only on talented high school and university students. Since the 2000s, it has gradually expanded its activities to include several places abroad, throughout the Carpathian Basin. In 2020, the Hungarian Parliament chose MCC as the future basis for talent nurturing for Hungarians living in Hungary or beyond the borders. It also provided the necessary financial resources for the realisation of this project built on standardised professional principles. The institution's goal is nothing less than to further improve the quality and accessibility of its talent development activities for the

benefit of the Hungarian people in the Carpathian Basin, for the advancement of the nation, and for the reinforcement of the community. It is planned that, from autumn 2021, MCC's **free training programmes from primary school to adulthood** will be available in 23 Hungarian cities across the Carpathian Basin, and in the next five years in 35 further places. In sum, MCC will provide development opportunities for around 10.000 talented young people.

MCC creates opportunities for youngsters by giving its students opportunities to unfold their capabilities, and learn from the best experts in Hungary and abroad, free of charge, regardless of their geographical or financial situation. The institution's unique talent development programme is designed to complement conventional public and university education by providing high quality training courses based on an interdisciplinary approach.

Mathias Corvinus Collegium also acts as a **knowledge centre**: in addition to its courses, it runs mobility programmes, offers a wide range of scholarships for young people, publishes books and academic papers, and organises international and national conferences and discussions. Furthermore, it also plays a role in promoting democratic dialogue and public debate.

Its talent centres offer special training courses as well. Among others, the **Leadership Academy** provides a one-year, full-time, intensive training course - unique in the region - where participants can advance their leadership skills. As for the associated **MCC Flow Research Institute**, its main objective is to enable students to experience the feeling of peak performance as often as possible.

MCC has undertaken the renovation of a number of buildings with a glorious past, but in poor condition now, at several places. It is committed to restoring these decayed properties to their former glory and turning them into educational centres.

MCC's aim is to prepare the next generation characterised by high potential, open-mindedness, international experience and a good command of foreign languages. With this skill set, they will be able to represent the Hungarian interests with confidence, even in the midst of global competition.

## Book Review

ANNETTE HEINBOKEL, GERMANY

Eleonor van Gerven is a teacher and an educator. It is her job to prepare teachers to fulfil their duties to stimulate all their pupils to reach their zone of proximal development. In the Dutch and Flemish education system that has to be done in an inclusive context, but that is not easy.

The research project for her doctoral thesis deals with developing a competency matrix to be used within the context of the inclusive approach of primary education. The book consists of three main parts

- Positioning Gifted Education in Primary Schools in the Dutch and Flemish Educational System
- The construction of the Competency Matrix
- Integrating Theory and Practice

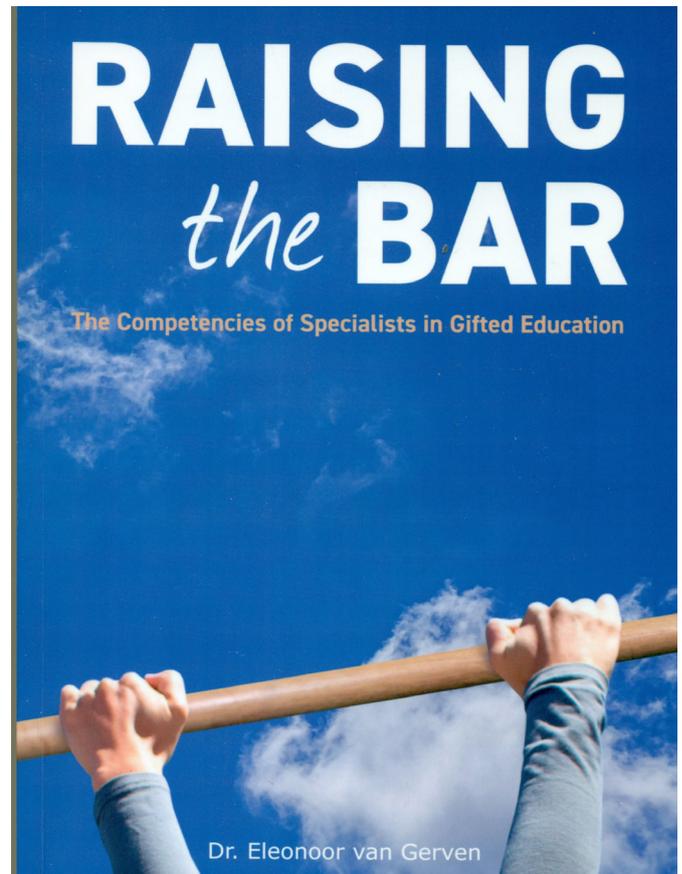
The competency matrix is meant to provide a framework for the curriculum development of postgraduate teacher education programmes for specialists in gifted (primary) education. The problem is complex. On the one hand the Netherlands and Flanders, based on the Salamanca agreement (Unesco 1994), have striven to develop an inclusive school system. On the other hand teachers found it was not possible for them to cater properly for the special needs of gifted children in an inclusive system. As a result, some schools offer full-time segregated education for gifted students, however, even more schools opted for part-time segregated schooling. There are hardly any results suggesting that full-time segregation is the most meaningful response for a group of learners that can hardly be called homogenous. Part-time segregated programmes may have a better and longer-lasting effect.

All children have educational needs, these needs differ. This leads to the logical thought that a Procrustean<sup>1</sup>-approach to education – to make children fit into a system – is no longer sufficient for what society demands of education.

Van Gerven's 'Raising the Bar' takes into account all aspects of the needs of gifted children and how teachers can cope. It refers primarily to the Netherlands and Flanders, however it should be read by everybody interested in improving the schooling and that way the lives of gifted children.

Annette Heinbokel, Editor of ECHA News

[annette.heinbokel@swbmail.de](mailto:annette.heinbokel@swbmail.de)



Eleonor van Gerven (2021). *Raising the Bar – The Competencies of Specialists in Gifted Education*, 509 pages

<sup>1</sup> In Greek mythology, Procrustes was a rogue smith and bandit from Attica who attacked people by stretching them or cutting off their legs, so as to force them to fit the size of an iron bed (Wikipedia).