

ECHA NEWS

EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR HIGH ABILITY

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Obituary Professor Doctor Joan Freeman

Dear ECHA Members,

Although the spirit of ECHA is young and fresh, our organization has the respectable age of 36. We grew and we are here to stay, that is clear. In an organization that lasts for so many years, the inevitable will happen: members will pass away. In the last few years, we lost our first elected president, Prof. Dr. Franz Mönks, our former Secretary Johanna Raffan and respected member Prof. Dr. Victor Müller-Oppliger.

And on the 2nd of July of this year, ECHA lost its founding president, Professor Doctor Joan Freeman.

In the eighties of the last century, Joan Freeman was part of a small group of scholars, from different European Countries, who had a dream: more understanding in Europe for high ability throughout the lifespan. In 1987, they decided to found the European Council for High Ability (ECHA), under the inspiring leadership of founding president Prof. Dr.

Joan Freeman. The primary aim of ECHA was to act as a European network. In the words of Joan Freeman: become a dynamic multinational association.

And so they did. Now, 36 years later, ECHA continues as the only European organization that strives for better education and mental health care for people with high abilities.

Joan was not only the founding president of our organization. She also was Editor-in-Chief of High Ability Studies, and was always an active member, joining all the ECHA conferences, where her lectures were well visited and highly appreciated.

Apart from her work in and for ECHA, in her own country Joan counselled many gifted children and helped their parents. And Joan was a famous scholar: One of her many publications, a longitudinal study of gifted children growing up – Gifted Lives – was famous around the world and showed people the frustrations and achievements of the

participating children while they grew up, and gave insight in the reasons why some had a lot of successes in life while others did not.

Joan Freeman has been honoured with a Fellowship and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the British Psychological Society, and a Lifetime Achievement Award from Mensa International.

She seemed to have eternal life. We have to accept, though, that we have to continue without her. We remember Joan as a very intelligent and involved person, who was actively present in all the monthly lectures, and until recently in every ECHA conference. We will miss her sharp observations, her incredible stories, her great sense of humour, and the great laughs we had together.

She will be remembered.

On behalf of ECHA, the executive committee,
Szilvia Fodor, Colm O'Reilly,
Lianne Hoogeveen

Editorial

ANNETTE HEINBOKEL, GERMANY

With great sadness I read about the passing away of Joan Freeman. What she did for gifted children, not only in Britain but worldwide, is unmeasurable.

Despite my great respect for her work there was one point, though, on which we two agreed to disagree: our attitude towards acceleration for gifted children. Her research and experience told her that children who had been accelerated were rather unhappy when they looked back at it as adults. My research and experience as a teacher told me that the children were happy having skipped, even as adults. The process of skipping was very different in Britain and in Germany. In Britain – children in her sample of families with gifted children skipped at around the late 60s / early 70s – at the time neither the children nor the parents were involved in the decision, it was ‘done’ to them by the schools. In Germany the children as well as the parents were always involved. Sometimes teachers suggested it, sometimes parents asked for it, sometimes even children had the idea: ‘Why can’t I be with my friend in the higher grade?’ Schools had to allow it, but the final decision was always taken by the parents and the children. ECHA members can read about our discussion in the spring issue of ECHA News volume 31, no. 1, 2017, p. 14-17.

Eva Vondráková’s report on the situation in the Czech Republic shows that the attitude towards gifted children waxes and

wanes, depending on the attitude of what party, which minister is responsible at the time. At present the Ministry of Education emphasizes “education together”, another name for inclusion. That means all the children, no matter what their intellectual gifts and interests or lack thereof, their physical abilities or handicaps, their emotional feelings are taught together in one classroom. However, parents whose child is at the margins of the class they attend can find that the special needs of their child are not or cannot be met. Then they have to become active on her / his behalf, and some of them are very successful.

It is probably the same in other countries, depending on how stable the political situation is.

When ECHA was founded three decades ago, the focus was on the needs of gifted children. It was the job of adults to improve their situation. As we know many gifted children are overlooked, maybe because their gifts are not obvious or their teachers don’t know enough about giftedness to recognize them. If their needs are not met they can develop problems that may still be relevant when they are adult. The same applies to all children with special needs. Noks Nauta and Agnes Schilder coach and counsel gifted adults, as well as Frans Corten described it in the last issue of ECHA News (37, no. 1)

There are several abstracts by people who went through the RHITA or the ECHA training.

The Role of Coordinators for Gifted Education Michaela Gutsjahr deals with the role of coordinators for gifted education. She writes: “The precondition of teacher leadership

lies in the concession of participation and appreciation by the principal and in the creation of a supportive environment by the community of teachers, parents and other supportive staff at schools.”

In the late 90s I started an enrichment programme for 10-12 year olds (acceleration was included) at my school. It was successful because it was supported by the head of the school. Besides there was the chance of twice informing the whole staff on giftedness for an hour or so. That was enough in this case to create a positive attitude at the school for gifted, bright and motivated children. The colleagues would allow individual children and small groups to leave their lessons and take part in enrichment courses, grade skipping was not a problem, either.

Something that many gifted and bright children, too, often suffer from is unbelievable boredom. It is one of the main reasons to contemplate acceleration. Silke Ohlmeier (2023) did research on the subject. Her definition of boredom is the ‘aversive experience to want to do something that is meaningful, but to be prevented from it’. This applies to children as well as to adults. The difference is, however, that adults are able to do something about their situation, children are not. They are dependent on adults, parents and teachers, to improve the situation for them. (see the quotation at the end of this issue)

Annette Heinbokel, editor

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Back to the Drawing Board: Potential Indicators of Giftedness in Human Figure Drawings

SVEN MATHIJSSSEN, THE NETHERLANDS

Introduction

I could open this article with an introduction that highlights the importance and relevance of identification of talents and needs of children with high abilities. However, I would much rather like to start off a little unconventional this time. So let's begin with a little assignment.

Think of someone you think is absolutely brilliant. Who to you is a perfect example of a genius? Chances are you think of a scientist, a sports athlete, or maybe a human rights activist. Probably someone who has accomplished great things. Let's take a cliché: Albert Einstein. Now, Einstein wasn't always the great physicist the world remembers. Einstein was once a child. A child who went to school. But for some children, school is not a very educational place. Take Einstein: he left school at 15 (The Center for History of Physics, n.d.) and even said, "The only thing that interferes with my learning is my education." He eventually turned out fine, but I did wonder: how many Einsteins didn't turn out fine? How many geniuses have remained invisible because they failed to realize their potential? That's what I focused on in my PhD research (Mathijssen, 2023). Together with Dr. Feltzer, Prof. Hoogeveen, Prof. Denissen and Prof. Bakx, I investigated whether human figure drawings contain potential indicators of giftedness and can serve as a screening tool that can be used in the identification process of (potential) talents and (educational) needs of children whose high abilities might not be fostered in traditional school settings.

'Children with high abilities'

In line with the current shift in focus on identification of talents and needs (as opposed to the identification of 'gifted children') (Dai & Chen, 2013; Lo & Porath, 2017; Lo et al., 2019), and following Ambrose and Machek (2015), the working definition of children with high abilities in my dissertation and this article is:

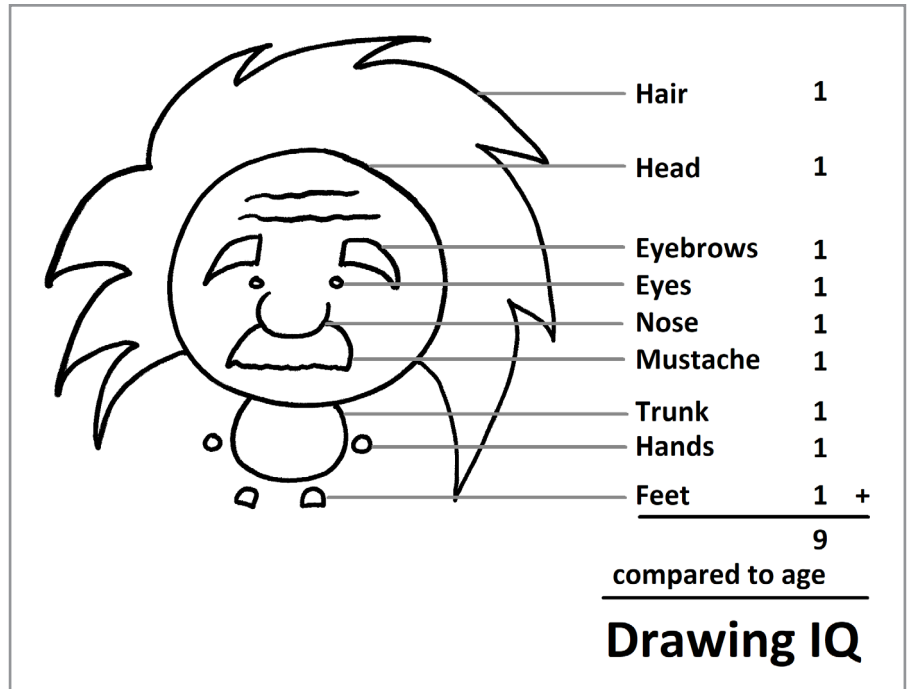


Figure 1: Drawing of Einstein and a global explanation on how drawing IQs are computed

Children who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities (p. 121)

Human figure drawings

Human figure drawings have already been extensively studied in relation to intelligence (Goodenough, 1926; Harris, 1963; Koppitz, 1968; Naglieri, 1988; Reisman & Yamokoski, 1973; Reynolds & Hickman, 2004). However, in our studies we did not look at intelligence or IQ specifically, because that alone turns out to be insufficient to identify what children with high abilities need (Ziegler et al., 2012). Case in point: did you know that William Shockley, inventor of the transistor (and physicist Luis Walter Alvarez!!!), was not allowed to participate in research as a child because his IQ was not high enough (Davis et al., 2014)? Inventing things involves creativity (Cropley, 2020). So do giftedness (e.g., Faber et al., 2021;

Kroesbergen et al., 2016) and drawing (Hui et al., 2015; Lee & Jun, 2015). And we tried to find out whether that creativity of children with high abilities also made them draw differently from their peers. If so, then human figure drawings could possibly serve as a screening instrument. After all, all children can make a drawing without having to spend a lot of time or money. While a drawing alone may not provide sufficient insight into what exactly a child needs in school, it could possibly cause someone to think, "Hey, that's remarkable, we need to keep an eye on that one," so that a closer look can then be taken at whether the current education is appropriate and, if not, what it would take to make it appropriate.

But let's start at the beginning. Human figure drawings have been examined for over a century using scoring systems that attempt to measure children's intelligence. This usually works roughly as follows. Such a scoring system contains a list of items for which the drawing can be checked. If the item is present, it scores one point. See

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Figure 1 for a drawing of Einstein as an example: hair, head, eyebrows, eyes, nose, mustache, trunk, hands, and feet all score one point each. Note that wrinkles in the forehead are not usually an item that is scored (I'll get back to that later). Adding that up, we get a raw score of 9. A raw score doesn't say much yet, because that score is not compared to a norm group. For a 4-year-old this could be perceived as a drawing with quite a lot of details, but not for a 12-year-old. So the raw score has to be compared to what is average for a given age group and that results in a standard score, which we call the drawing IQ. And that drawing IQ supposedly says something about the child's intelligence. So the higher the drawing IQ, the smarter the child. But there is a lot of debate about this among scholars (Mathijssen et al., 2018). We therefore proceeded cautiously by following the usual paths for research on drawings first.

The usual and the unusual

In our first study (Mathijssen et al., 2016), in which 120 children aged 7 to 9 participated, we compared the drawing IQs of children receiving regular education with those of children receiving gifted education (at the time that was called Leonardo education in the Netherlands). These were calculated using two scoring systems: the Goodenough-Harris Drawing Test (Harris, 1963), which is fairly well known in the Netherlands, and Naglieri's (1988) Draw a Person: A Quantitative Scoring System. Assuming that a higher drawing IQ also means higher intelligence, one might expect that the children of Leonardo education would achieve higher drawing IQs. However, we did not find that: the drawing IQs of the two groups did not differ. We therefore looked beyond the scores and examined exactly all that was drawn, including items that were not taken into account in Harris' and Naglieri's two scoring systems. Consider, for example, the wrinkles in Einstein's forehead in Figure 1. We thus found a number of items that appeared only in the drawings of children receiving gifted education. Items such as a goatee, freckles, a tie and genitals. Mind you, these items were obviously not drawn by all children with high abilities. Moreover, one risk is that isolated items quickly

cease to be truly predictive: think of a child who would be told not to forget the goatee in particular. And needless to say, a recommendation for gifted education is not likely based on the ability to draw penises. It is more complex and nuanced, also because younger children draw differently than 7 to 9-year-olds.

Determining exceptionality

In our second study (Mathijssen et al., 2022), in which 206 4 to 6-year-olds from fulltime regular education participated, it was difficult to make comparisons between the drawings of children with high abilities and their age mates. Teachers nominated 17 children to be developmentally advanced, and of some there were only suspicions. However, we were able to determine 'exceptional items' in much the same way as researcher Koppitz did in the 1960s (Koppitz, 1968). To do so, we examined the drawings per age group to see which items appeared in less than 15% of the drawings and called those items the exceptional items. In doing so, we also found that most of the exceptional items were drawn by 4-year-olds and that the number of exceptional items became progressively lower among 5- and 6-year-olds.

Two years later

In our third and final study (Mathijssen et al., 2023), two years after the drawings were made we asked parents whether their children received educational adaptations and, if so, what they were. There were 67 children who received clear and concrete adjustments that indicated enriched education, such as compacting, enrichment, or participation in a pull-out programme. Eighty-five children received fulltime regular education, without adaptations. We examined which exceptional items from the second study were drawn only or more frequently by the 67 children who received enriched education. We called these the 'focus items'. We divided these into three categories, because of the limitations in predictability of single items (think back of the child who would be reminded to draw a goatee). The categories were: 1) content focus items, which were mainly

about what was drawn and not whether it looked realistic or beautiful, 2) formal focus items, as described by Harris and Naglieri, which were mainly about how the item was drawn, think of firm linework and correct proportions, which do make a drawing look realistic or beautiful, and which also require certain motor skills, and 3) emotional indicators, as described by Koppitz, which involved omission of body parts or consciously drawing abnormal sizes or distortions of body parts or the whole human figure. The specific focus items within these categories differed per age group. We therefore compared the drawings separately for 4-, 5- and 6-year-olds. Very briefly put, the test we used checked for each age group whether drawing one or more focus items within each category could distinguish between the enriched-education group and the regular-education group. And if so to what extent children were 'correctly classified' based on drawing or not drawing these focus items.

For the 4-year-olds, it was indeed possible to distinguish between the two groups: with the content focus items (what was drawn), about 74% of the children were 'correctly classified'. Examples of items involved were eyelashes, a two-dimensional mouth, and multiple human figures. With the emotional indicators, about 69% of the children were 'correctly classified', and examples of items involved were a very small head, shaded hands, and asymmetrical body parts. However, with the formal focus items (i.e., how items were drawn) no distinction could be made between the two groups of children.

For the 5-year-olds, we found about the same: the content focus items and the emotional indicators classified 74 and 72% correctly, respectively. Examples of drawn items included: a slanted figure, irises, teeth, no or short arms, a large hand, and a thumb. Again, the formal focus items could not distinguish between the two groups of children.

For the 6-year-olds, however, the focus items could not distinguish between the enriched-education and regular-

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education groups. This is probably due to the combination of very few 6-year-olds in our study ($n = 28$) and a low number of focus items per category.

A proof of concept

For 4- and 5-year-olds, with these findings we have provided evidence for the possibility that human figure drawings can serve as a screening tool for children in need of enriched education. However, we're not there yet. Our findings are too limited to state that we now have such a screening tool. More research is needed with larger groups of children throughout the Netherlands and preferably from other countries as well. This study therefore serves as evidence, a so-called 'proof of concept', which should be handled with caution in practice at this time. At the same time, it does represent an important step toward such a screening tool, which may take us further in seeing those invisible Einsteins through their drawings, hopefully before our image of them is distorted.

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Coaching and Counselling Gifted Adults with Understanding, Knowledge and Wisdom

NOKS NAUTA & AGNES SCHILDER,
THE NETHERLANDS

In the Netherlands attention to coaching and counselling (see note 1) gifted adults is growing. Is this good news, because very useful and really about time? Or perhaps superfluous and only causing even more compartmentalisation and pigeonholing in disorders-land? In this article, we tell you what we notice and what we think are prerequisites for effective coaching of gifted adults.

What do we notice?

People who coach the gifted form an extremely diverse group. We know people with completed training as psychologists or (ortho)pedagogues. There are people from education, business services and also people with a completely different background in, for instance, chemistry, biology, IT, business administration or linguistics. What they have in common is that they have discovered in themselves that they are gifted, quite often they find out about themselves when their children turn out to be gifted. And then they find that they can understand other gifted people very well. Some have done coaching training, a few followed a specific training for gifted counsellors, such as RITHA (Radboud University International Training on High Ability formerly known as ECHA) in the Netherlands. These two courses offer not only a lot of knowledge about gifted children but also some knowledge about gifted adults. There is no specific training for coaching gifted adults in the Netherlands, as far as we know.

The coaches we know follow(ed) a wide variety of additional courses/training. We heard about NLP, ACT and various other, mostly short courses. Occasionally, a coach will do a vocational training or university (under)graduate course, e.g. the vocational training applied psychology, to gain more depth.

In our opinion, coaches without training in psychology or pedagogy form a nice (valued?) complement to counselling with professionally-registered counsellors (in health care). After all, if you have 'life questions', you don't need to enter a long-term help/therapy programme. The fact that you have to pay for this help yourself (which is therefore offered outside the regular social work circuit) can be a big barrier for some, but there are also coaches who call this an advantage because clients are then highly motivated.

In this article, we explore the prerequisites for effective coaching of gifted adults. Based on our experience, we arrive at least at the following: understanding the gifted client, sufficient knowledge about giftedness (especially in adults), a foundation of psychological knowledge and finally: wisdom. We discuss them below.

Understanding the gifted client

Coaches for the gifted are usually gifted themselves and, in the journey they themselves have taken to deal with it constructively, they have learned a lot about themselves. They then want to use that to coach other gifted people. This motivation is very often mentioned in their choice to do this work. In our opinion, it is definitely an important condition for good contact if the coach is gifted her- or himself. Gifted people understand each other because they think quickly and have several trains of thought simultaneously. They also recognise the pitfalls of other gifted people and empathise with any pain there may be, for example in relation to barriers in someone's life, studies and work.

Yermish (2010) published about her own experiences as a psychotherapist with gifted clients. Here is a quote.

"Within the gifted community, the common wisdom is that one must find a therapist who understands the intrapersonal, social, and cultural experiences of being highly

intelligent. Without this understanding, informal reports suggest that miscarriages of the therapeutic working alliance may be frequent, and that clients may avoid or leave therapy as a result. However, few therapists or researchers acknowledge intelligence as a dimension of human difference which could be relevant to therapy, or how their own relational selves might be affected by the prospect of doing this work" (Yermish, 2010).

David (2021) describes the same thing in her more recent literature review. She says that high intelligence is a necessary condition for a good therapeutic relationship with a gifted person.

We do not deny this from our experiences. And among gifted people, this opinion also prevails. But people talk after each other, often without looking for the source (some evidence?). And also, our question is: how big may the gap in IQ be? So, can a highly gifted client (IQ of 145 or higher) connect with a coach or therapist with an IQ of 130?

And as a coach for the gifted, is it enough to be gifted yourself? No, we don't think so. Especially if you have only known about your own giftedness for a short time and have gained relatively little knowledge apart from your own experiences. If you have a cup of tea at the kitchen table or go for a walk together to discuss all kinds of aspects of giftedness, we think that is absolutely fine. However, it seems a bit thin to us to then call yourself a professional coach and charge money for it.

Gifted people who are looking for appropriate help say that they have often gone through a long search, during which they have also visited professional health care workers (e.g. in the mental health services) and did not feel understood there. Giftedness was often not discussed there. A Dutch study (Emans, 2017) among over 600 gifted people found that, when seeking help in the mental health system, giftedness was rarely included in diagnostics, counselling and resolution.

Another question on our minds is: as a coach, how much do you share your own (negative) experiences as a gifted person? There are varying opinions on this. We believe that one should at least have processed one's own negative experiences sufficiently.

Being truly understood by someone, who knows first-hand what it is like to be gifted, is, in our opinion, a prerequisite for an effective pathway. But, as already mentioned, is it enough?

Knowledge about giftedness

It is difficult to say anything about knowledge about giftedness. Doing good research on this target group is difficult. After all, we do not have a representative sample of gifted people. Those who know themselves to be gifted often only find out when problems arise and when the gifted themselves or those around them look for the reason. What causes someone to get stuck in work, a study or a relationship? Gifted people who participate in research actually constitute a 'negative' selection. We have to make do mainly with stories from and about gifted adults. These experiences have now been collected and processed in articles and books for more than 20 years. With the proviso that it is therefore only about gifted people who have been recognised as such.

Gifted is a description of characteristics of people with a high intelligence. You are highly intelligent if you are among the 2% highest scoring on an intelligence test. This has the implication that you can therefore be highly intelligent without (explicitly) knowing it yourself.

Knowledge about gifted adults slowly gets off the ground. One possible reason for this is the lack of funding. Thus, it remains a matter of student projects, for example, and the occasional researcher with a personal interest, such as Rinn & Bishop (2015). Maggie Brown (psychotherapist in New Zealand) conducted an interesting international Delphi study among experts (Brown, 2021; Brown et al 2020).

As usual within psychology, professionals also look at giftedness from different perspectives, there are certain 'schools'.

Think of those who use Dabrowski's theory as the explanatory basis, those who see trauma as an important factor or adhere to Gardner's multiple intelligence theory and so on. Professionals with an educational background often use classifications into types of (gifted) learners, by them some learning disabilities are explained by giftedness. Stories about deficient executive functions also come along.

Even though there is no single comprehensive theory of giftedness, different theories and insights may very well coexist. The problem is that some theories claim to explain everything. And for some theories, despite research, no scientific support has really been found, such as Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (Warne, 2020). Theories that have long been completely rejected with substantiation also still come up, just think of the so-called verbal-performance gap in the gifted and the suggestion that specific problems would accompany it. This appears to be unsubstantiated and has mostly to do with tests used in the past.

The basic knowledge about giftedness among coaches for the gifted is generally there, we suppose. How reliable and recent that knowledge is, is hard to say. In view of the above, it is also very difficult to indicate a basic standard for this. The knowledge about giftedness among people working in the mental health sector could be much better, according to many. Unfortunately, there is also still a lot of prejudice in that sector. "Gifted, but not crazy" is the sigh of many gifted people.

Psychological knowledge

Although coaches are often not trained as psychologists, they do enter psychological fields. They do make use of psychological knowledge, albeit sometimes piecemeal or unconsciously. They have learned something during training, read something somewhere et cetera. Sometimes they have learned applications of a psychological theory or method without mastering the theory behind it. There is a risk that a theory is applied without nuance as the truth. While you may wonder when that theory is valid (and especially when it is not) and

if and how you could use the theory in a specific situation. Some knowledge is outdated, revised by new research and yet it keeps surfacing. Is telling people that their theories are not valid harmful? Perhaps not directly. But if the coachee reads something about it and finds out that the knowledge offered is not correct or partially incorrect, confidence in the coach may be shaken.

We sometimes wonder if coaches who claim to work 'eclectically' or 'holistically' are actually mostly mixing theories, which have nothing to do with each other. This may come across as very creative but is also 'polluting'. Dabrowski is then, for instance, mixed with Spiral Dynamics, with Maslow, with moral development (Kohlberg), with Freud and so on. So you can deploy anything if it suits you, without the theoretical background being correct. "As long as it works in practice" some say. Yes indeed, that is an important criterion, but if it seems to work is it always OK?

So that is the question. Coaches who make statements about autism, ADHD and other classifications from the DSM are treading on thin ice. Someone who has no training for this should keep far away from these statements. Classification is not the completion of a checklist. Making such statements can help someone interpret what is going on but it can also be very damaging. Anyone who has heard a term from the DSM used once by a coach does not simply disregard it. Such a term can be very stigmatising and also become a self-fulfilling prophecy: "I'm autistic so I don't like.....". People then start interpreting their behaviour themselves and assume that they are therefore just like that and therefore can't do anything about it. This inhibits opportunities for growth and development, which seems to us to be an undesirable effect.

Doing what works

Our first reaction to enthusiastic stories from gifted people about their coaches is: how wonderful that these coaches can sense gifted people so well and make deep contact with them! Even people who have already been to the mental health services because of psychological problems, people who are completely

stuck, young people who are stuck and don't want to talk to anyone. It requires a lot of empathy and creativity to get in touch with them and help them. They are glad and happy to have finally found someone who understands what they are talking about.

Of course, any way of getting people to deal with their life difficulties in a constructive way is valuable. The coach's relationship with the client is essential and possibly the only thing that really matters. If that works, then surely it is fine you would say.

Only... how do we actually know what works and what doesn't? The coachees feel heard and seen, which is great. Coach and coachee are sincere in that, we have no worries about that. Perhaps it would be better to realise that 'knowing you are heard and seen' even closer to home. At home, with your partner, your friends. But what if they don't understand you and know nothing about giftedness? And if you then find a coach who does understand you? Isn't that fantastic?

When you tell me I am gifted, and that fits with everything I have experienced and tell, this makes all sorts of things 'fall into place' for me. I then use my 'chattering brain'. My brain gives meaning to what our senses perceive; so we do not see the truth but a reality we create ourselves. My chattering brain can be satisfied with the word 'gifted'. This is because it gives consistency, coherence, staying power in my life, which is very nice and works. It is a form of psycho-education.

Is it correct?

But does that hold true? Am I rightly going to categorise all kinds of issues going on in my life under the heading of giftedness and am I going to behave accordingly? Am I living up to my own theory? Yes, because as a human being I do that all the time. The explanations and terms I use are really nothing but pigeonholes that my chattering brain uses to signify: I shut down now because I am hypersensitive to sounds, I stop doing this because I get bored easily. Giving words to what I experience is useful and tricky at the same time. After all, once I interpret it, I can start

to see it as fact when it is not, we humans are quick to do that: I am extroverted, I am afraid of heights, I am autistic so... But does this belong to a so, is the label really an explanation or just a term? A label can lead to fixation and, as noted earlier, block your learning and growth opportunities.

Long-term

In particular, our concerns lie in what really works in the long run: is pigeonholing bidding perhaps a band-aid and masking what really needs attention? We believe this is a reification error. When you reify, you describe something as if it exists as reality (the Latin word *res* means thing), whereas it is a term, used only for an idea or an abstraction. More explanation below.

It is best to refer to some of the behaviours we observe in someone with a collective name, we do this all the time: autism, ADHD, Parkinson's, resistance, motivation. That describes the behaviour we see and that can be very helpful. However, a description of a set of symptoms or behaviours with a corresponding name says nothing about the reason for them, it gives no explanation. A child we find busy and we call that ADHD, the child is not busy because of the ADHD. ADHD is not an independent thing and why do people need this term? (See e.g. Dehue et al, 2017). Even a term for a somatic disease like diabetes, is in fact an agreement among doctors. You are not sick because of diabetes, you have a condition and we call it diabetes. To live with that, you need to know a lot more about it than just the term. You can plan your life accordingly and then it helps enormously to learn about your sugar metabolism and how it works in your living situation.

The same applies to giftedness, insofar as we are talking about describing characteristics. High intelligence, the basic element of giftedness, is measurable, just like your blood sugar level in diabetes, but it is ultimately about how you use that intelligence in interaction with who you have become, through your upbringing and environment, the societal culture, your emotional style, your family, your school, your work et cetera. So it does not stand alone, it is not a 'thing' you

can grasp. Giftedness is not a diagnosis, your giftedness is a personal expression. It describes but explains nothing, the 'cause' of the characteristics of giftedness thus remains hidden.

In short, the attention and psycho-education that coaches provide is worth its weight in gold, we do not diminish that. Provided, of course, that coaches do not claim nonsense and realise that a theory is an attempt to describe a reality. That description should never be confused with reality, nor does the term offer an explanation for behaviour or problems, it merely describes observed characteristics.

We raise another question: does coaching really help in the long run? After all, a satisfied customer is not always a helped customer. A patient who is under a lot of stress and is given tranquilliser tablets by the doctor that bring instant calm feels well helped but is it really? Real learning is often not fun, that does a little "ouch". The video by Rabbi Dr A. Twerski (Twerski, no date) on how lobsters grow gives a beautiful picture of how lobsters, due to the pain of too tight an enclosure, get the idea of shedding their old shell and only then can they enter the next phase. The realisation of being gifted can be the start of such a new phase of development. That pain is a kind of mourning, sadness about the past, about not feeling understood, and is also regularly accompanied by a realisation of 'that it's right', a feeling of coming home and also relief that being 'different' now has a name.

Possible damage from coaching?

Here, we want to tentatively suggest something about the possible damage that could result from coaching. If giftedness is seen as an explanation for all the problems one encounters, it sometimes hinders the ability to learn to cope with them. Of course, it is difficult if there was no secure attachment early in life. But anyone who hangs that on giftedness alone does nothing with it. They may remain stuck in victimisation. But in our view, giftedness is about interacting with you as a person, with others and with situations. Giftedness is a set of positive characteristics that one sometimes still has to learn to use as an

adult because one has not learned to do so earlier in life. When coaches are too quick to use their own experiences or start sticking labels (from the DSM), it can do harm. It leads to medicalisation, the belief that there is something wrong with you, that won't get you anywhere. We think that gifted persons do get further if they examine their own emotions, feelings and behaviour. And ask themselves how to live well with their own characteristics. So instead of saying "this person is gifted" and leaving it at that, we advocate asking about those characteristics of giftedness: "What meaning does that have for you? How do you use your gifts? What would you like to explore, what further develop, what learn and what do you want to stop doing?" By this we do not mean to suggest that everything is malleable and a matter of choices, but we do advocate asking what your giftedness means rather than stopping at the label as if that explains or solves anything.

Wisdom

What is wisdom in coaching? For example, we come up with: taking yourself away as a coach, being sufficiently critical, being nuanced, being humble, (fill it in further as a reader). Socrates, with his statement, "I know that I know nothing", is the prototype of a wise person. Psychologist Paul Baltes studied wisdom and took a pragmatic approach: a way of doing things rather than a way of looking at things.

Wisdom of the coach is needed: we think to assist the other person in their quest with a warm heart, not by offering band-aids and quick fixes, but by exploring the quest, called life, together. The value of coaching lies in discovering together what works for that person. It is the coach who uses his/her expertise, who can share experience, who can make suggestions, but it is the coachee who does the work because only he/she knows what really fits.

In conclusion

What are prerequisites for effective coaching of gifted adults? Being gifted yourself seems important, but that

is not really substantiated anywhere. Education is important, but does not say everything about someone's quality to be able to coach / guide. Knowledge about giftedness is patchy and comes from various perspectives. There is no consensus on what constitutes reliable knowledge. We believe that wisdom is also very important.

In our view, the following is important. Distinguish between what is pleasant for the client and/or the coach and what really works: do not rely only on training, nor on your own experience. Remain critical. Coaching is a profession, a skill. You can learn that skill but the fact that you understand your profession does not mean that you do the right things and that you do things well. So test both!

When coaches and therapists of the gifted engage in conversation together, for instance in peer review, shared insights can emerge. Perhaps this will provide a nice impetus for a basic programme for coaches for the gifted. We do not advocate compulsory in-service training with a lot of theoretical knowledge for coaches or a new registration, but rather to be able to use the knowledge wisely to explore life's questions together with the coachee.

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NOTE 1

In The Netherlands the term 'coach' is used for people who offer a broad range of counselling. In English many people would prefer the word 'counsellor'. Therapists sometimes use the word coaching for a way of therapy that is activating.

NOTE 2

This article is a shorter and adapted version of a blog in Dutch, that was published in June 2013 on the blogposts of both authors.

AUTHORS

Noks Nauta is a non-practising medical doctor and a psychologist of work and organisation. Since discovering in 2000 that she herself is gifted, she has been collecting and disseminating knowledge about gifted adults and seniors. She does this mainly through the Gifted Adults Foundation in the Netherlands (IHBV), where some of her books have also been published: *Webshop - IHBV*. See also: www.noksnauta.nl | *Welkom! Mijn weblog gaat vooral over hoogbegaafdheid, gezondheid, ziekte en zorg en muziek. Ik schrijf hier persoonlijke ervaringen. (wordpress.com)*

Agnes Schilder is a psychologist, teacher, coach and speaker. Her interests include applied, positive psychology and giftedness in adults. Together with others, she organises HB cafés in Groningen (see www.ihbv.nl) and is committed to increasing knowledge about giftedness by giving presentations and having conversations with professionals, (young) adults and older people about (their) giftedness. More information: www.bovenhetmaaveldcoaching.nl

A Project on the Topic of Gifted Education in Flanders (Belgium): The Dawn of a New Era

IGNACE RYHEUL, BELGIUM

Flanders can be described as the Flemish speaking part of Belgium. It counts 6,5 million inhabitants, of which 1,1 million go to school (ages 2,5-18). In the year 2020, the Flemish department of education decided to set up a relatively small-scaled programme (budget €500.000/year) to stimulate education for cognitively strong students. Three years later, we can say that the results in the field are beyond expectation.

Obviously, there are multiple ways to explain what happened. In this short overview we try to describe the general content and the achievements of the project. Between the lines, we also try to identify facilitating factors and pitfalls.

Two guidelines

Before the start of the project in 2020, there was no coordinated policy on gifted education at all. Of course, some schools made efforts. Especially in primary schools, some good practices were already applied, but most of them were small-scaled and stand-alone. Many more educational efforts were made for pupils and students with learning problems. There is nothing wrong with that statement, but there was an obvious and growing imbalance.

So the Flemish department of education took action with a school-based policy of learning networks, based on two principles.

1. Policy on gifted education in schools should be evidence informed
2. Schools can learn from each other by sharing knowledge and expertise

On the topic of gifted education, there is already a lot of scientific research available. The government selected Expertise Centre TALENT (KU Leuven) to join and coordinate the programme. This was a crucial choice. From that moment on, it was clear that dissemination of information towards schools was based on

a scientific basis. This helped to convince boards, principals and teachers to join the programme.

Secondly, the Department of Education selected nine primary and four secondary "Anchor Schools". These schools had already set up an internal policy on gifted education in the past, and prepared - together with the Expertise Centre TALENT - the formation of thirteen learning networks throughout Flanders. In the second year of the project, other schools were able to join these networks voluntarily, with a maximum of 20 schools in each Learning Network. These schools met on a monthly basis: live, online or hybrid. Some of the meetings were thematic, other meetings focused on case studies or practical achievements. In the third year of the project, the existing Learning Networks continued with advanced learning on gifted education, but Anchor Schools also did set up a new cycle of Learning Networks for newly interested schools. After three years, more than 300 schools joined these Learning Networks, so the project covered around 10% of all schools in Flanders.

Learning needs

The target group of the programme was defined as Cognitively Strong Functioning (CSF) pupils. This concept is broader than what most people consider as gifted pupils. CSF includes the 10% pupils with the highest cognitive capacity and with the highest cognitive performance. In practice, this means that this project focuses on these 10 to 15% of the pupils who need extracurricular cognitive challenges during their school career. The focus is bottom up: which educational interventions does this child need at this time, in these circumstances, to fulfill the learning needs?

Considered this way, the CSF-way of thinking stays away from the semantic discussions of giftedness. A label of giftedness is not required to join the adapted educational programmes.

The concept of CSF embraces a growth mindset and autonomy for participants to join (or not). Again: it focuses on learning conditions. This is important, because teachers are very receptive to this line of thought. Most of them realize that learning needs to differ between pupils. This insight can lead to more targeted action in the classroom or at a school level.

However, schools should realize that screening on CSF implies a good idea of the concept. Screening as a stand-alone disposition can never be a purpose in itself. It should always be joined with suitable interventions (differentiation, deepening challenges or acceleration) in the classroom. This is where the Learning Networks can help and support.

More output

Besides the exchange of knowledge and expertise, the Anchor Schools together with the Expertise Centre realized some output that was directly connected with gifted education for pupils aged 2,5-18. A conference day (October 2022) was fully booked, there was the publication of an inspiration book on Gifted Education, a presentation at the ECHA conference in Den Haag (August 2022), the publication of an overview that describes qualitative school policy, several contacts with different stakeholders (parents, professional attendants, policy officers, teacher trainers, ...) to understand their educational and professional needs concerning gifted education.

New legislation

From the beginning of the project, it was also clear that legislation in Flanders did not match entirely with educational needs of cognitively strong functioning youngsters. Some of the suggestions made by the Anchor Schools and Expertise Centre became law in 2022. Most of the new legislation was necessary to make qualitative acceleration possible in schools.

In Flanders, education is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 18. Most young people go to school between 2,5 and 18, but homeschooling is also possible. In summary, the school system is divided in three stages: preschool education (age 2,5 – 6), primary education (age 6-12) and secondary education (age 12-18, divided in three grades of two years).

Of course subject or grade-based acceleration is not the best option for every student, not even for every cognitively strong student. But for these students for whom a thorough track of differentiation and curricular enrichment turns out to be insufficient, qualitative and guided acceleration can be a very effective way of challenging and motivating. At the age of eighteen, around 1,5% (or almost 6000) of the all students in Flanders skipped a school year at least once.

Skipping a year in preschool and primary school was already possible before 2022, but not in regular secondary schools. However, skipping a year was possible by taking part in central exams in Brussels. In most of these cases, students had to study and travel on their own, without lots of support from teachers. From the view of the students and their parents, this felt very hard to manage, undemocratic and in some cases even unfair.

This has changed now: since September 2022, the government made acceleration possible within the secondary school

system. It is very interesting to notice that the power of decision lies in the hands of teachers. This is the spirit of the new legislation: the class board can decide at every moment and at every age that a student has reached the goals for the different learning subjects. This means that the government shows confidence in the professionalism at the level of schools and teachers. The cognitively strongest students can skip one or more years, with the help and support of teachers and their own social network of other students at school.

Of course...

Of course, long-term effects of the project and legislation should be analyzed in a scientific way. It is too early to make final conclusions here. However, we can already say that some worries did not come true. The new legislation did not bring a revolution within schools or within the school system. Today, there are no massive numbers of new acceleration requests from students or parents. But for those students who do participate, results can be very positive as international studies show that most of the students in professionally supervised accelerated tracks have more friends than they had before, are more confident, learned more and are happier.

Of course, not all the schools are already high-leveled when it comes to knowledge

and good practices on the topic of gifted education. The learning networks still have to fulfill their function, but there is confidence, based on a scientific approach and a cooperative role for schools and teachers.

Of course, the work is absolutely not finished yet. Therefore, the government decided to double the yearly budgets and prolong the project for another five years, starting from September 2023. More scientific input from several Flemish universities, in combination with more Anchor Schools and larger Learning Networks can make a large and positive difference for a lot of cognitively strong students. That is the ultimate goal.

Ignace Ryheul has been a mentor of cognitively strong pupils at Sint-Jozef Humaniora Bruges (Belgium) since 2010 and has worked at an Anchor School for the Cognitively Strong Functioning (CSF) in Flanders since 2020. He is an ECHA specialist in Gifted Education and a member of ECHA's Special Interest Group on Acceleration. Yearly, he supervises about five pupils through skipping a grade.

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ECHA's new Special Interest Group on Acceleration

HAIDO SAMARAS, GREECE

Dr. Annette Heinbokel, a proponent of acceleration, acknowledges that families with both gifted and profoundly gifted children possess an awareness of their distinctions. Addressing the cognitive requirements of these children without acceleration, including radical methodologies, is not practical. For specific cases of giftedness, particularly profound instances, mere exposure to peers of the same age is not adequate. Gifted individuals often stand out intellectually with distinct interests, creative problem-solving skills, and advanced comprehension abilities. Acceleration serves to align a child's competencies with advanced educational content, encompassing strategies like grade skipping, subject acceleration, and curriculum compacting.

Gifted and highly gifted children are often also advanced in their emotional development, although rarely as much as intellectually. Therefore they fit in better with

older children, whose overall development is closer to theirs. However, there will always be more enrichment on offer and accepted. To enjoy and profit from it, the main consideration is a high interest in whatever is on offer.

In January 2022, Dr. Heinbokel delivered an insightful lecture on Acceleration during ECHA's monthly presentations. She elucidated 12 pivotal considerations (see '12 points to think of when skipping a grade', ECHA website) for grade skipping and drew a comparative analysis between acceleration and enrichment approaches (see Comparison Acceleration – Enrichment, ECHA website). Her discourse instigated ECHA members to inaugurate a Special Interest Group on Acceleration (SIG-A) aimed at dispelling misconceptions about acceleration. The SIG, headed by Annette Heinbokel, includes Ignace Ryheul from Belgium, Haido Samaras from Greece, Petra Leinigen from Germany, Gerald Stachl from Austria, Andrée Therrien from Canada and Leonieke Boogaard from the Netherlands, serving on the advisory board.

The SIG's preliminary objectives encompass a) formulating a mission statement, b) planning a comprehensive survey to collect input from accelerated individuals across Europe, spanning children, students, and adults, with the intention of publishing results on the ECHA website, and c) compiling a compendium of resources encompassing books, articles, websites, and studies pertinent to acceleration.

Haido Samaras has been teaching Computer Science for the last 30 years at Anatolia College of Thessaloniki, Greece and currently holds the role of Academic Dean for Center for Talented Youth (CTY) Greece. Her journey into gifted education began in 2013 at Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth (CTY JHU), evolving to roles ranging from instructor to site director at CTY Greece in Athens and Thessaloniki since 2014, where she leads professional development across Greece and Cyprus and engages with staff and student program needs all year round.

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ABSTRACT FOR A
RITHA DIPLOMA

Potential Impact of Information Communication Technology on Differentiation in Croatian Schools

JANJA BANIĆ, CROATIA

This article aims to examine the potential impact of ICT (Information Communication Technology) on the possibilities of applying models of differentiation in Croatian schools. To achieve this, the article provides an overview of the studied literature on differentiation, and the potential impact of ICT and artificial intelligence (AI) as one of the fastest growing areas in ICT on differentiation. The article introduces the guidelines provided by the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education (2022) for working

with gifted students. They suggest that the use of ICT can enhance differentiation by providing more personalized learning opportunities, efficient assessment, improved communication among students and teachers. The implementation of ICT in Croatian schools faces challenges such as a lack of application of guidelines in practice, lack of infrastructure, teachers' and students' training, access to technology for all students, using AI in an ethical and responsible manner on the needs and well-being of students. This article identifies active learning strategies for the successful implementation of ICT in differentiation in the Croatian schools and concludes by

highlighting the need for further research to address challenges.

Janja Banić is currently the headmistress of Prva gimnazija Varaždin, one of the leading high schools in Varaždin County and Croatia in general and leading Centre of Excellence in ICT since 2009. Starting out as an Informatics / Computer Science teacher, she devoted a lot of time to preparing gifted and talented students for different competitions on a national and international level. In her current positions, she is able to influence various key aspects that enable talented and gifted students to develop their skills.

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News from the Czech Republic

EVA VONDRÁKOVÁ, CZECH REPUBLIC

The current situation in the entire education system and in the education of the gifted in the Czech Republic is rather strange. Individual ministries agree that development in the Czech Republic is slowing down and that it is therefore necessary to take measures to improve it. But they differ in the idea of what needs to be done. The Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of Science, Research and Innovation point to a lack of experts with the necessary qualifications. There is a lack of experts, especially those with a technical or natural science education, who are independent and creative. There is still a shortage of several thousand teachers. The analysis shows that although the number of teachers has recently been increasing annually, there is still a shortage of teachers in some regions, and it is not certain whether the current situation will bring new applicants to the teaching profession. The situation is particularly tense for teachers of physics, mathematics, chemistry and computer science, who can find easy employment and better pay in the world of technological development.

There is always something going on in our education system - the ministers change most often here. For example, we have already had the 24th minister since 1989 (since my last report for ECHA news, spring 2022, it is already the third minister). Each brings some news, usually recommended to him by his advisors. In the short time they have to become more familiar with the entire breadth of the issue, something that has not proven itself in the past (but which has already been forgotten) is sometimes promoted as a desirable innovation. While the other two ministries mentioned emphasize the need to support talent development, the Ministry of Education emphasizes "education together", a new name for inclusion. In this school year, the first gifted class at the Hájkova elementary school in Olomouc, where these classes had been operating since 2006, did not open. Parents who want a school for their gifted children that will meet their specific educational as well as social and emotional needs are therefore looking for other solutions.

A new private school that offers a gifted programme has just started its activities in Olomouc. It is another from the "World of Education" network of schoolsⁱ.

The founder is Tomáš Blumenstein, former chairman of Mensa CR. When it comes to parents but also teachers and others interested in supporting gifted children, they are capable of action, especially in Moravia. Mrs. Lucie Korhelová, the mother of an exceptionally gifted but "incompatible" boy in a regular school, who is now home-schooled, founded the Facebook group "We adults of the gifted". She asked me (E. Vondráková) for cooperation. As she wants to cooperate with high-quality foreign associations of parents (and because she knows German), I recommended the Deutsche Gesellschaft für das hochbegabte Kind (DGhK) to herⁱⁱ.

Hundreds of parents and teachers who want to share their experiences and get quality professional information and help in raising their gifted children and pupils sign up for the Facebook group "We adults of the gifted". We have already received positive feedback from them on the "World of Education", which has restored the psychological well-being and joy of getting to know a gifted girl whose educational needs were ignored by the previous school.

At the Ministry of Education the effort to completely cancel or at least suppress any division of students into groups that would work at different levels is growing stronger, not only a multi-year high school, but also dividing a class into more advanced and less advanced groups in mathematics, foreign languages, etc.

Expert meetings on gifted work present examples of good practice in the mixed classroom. Proponents of this seemingly single approach to the gifted do not at all take into account the curiosity of exceptionally gifted children, their deep interest in topics unusual for their peers, their "obsession" with issues that they do not encounter in regular school and usually have no one to talk to about them.

Exceptionally gifted pupils and students, successful in science and art competitions, who at the same time show excellent

academic performance and work (with pleasure) in their field of interest with a great commitment in terms of time and energy, often encounter obstacles that are placed on them by school. For example, they have to fill in exercise books for the time they were not at school (for example due to a competition or a training camp), despite the fact that they have a perfect command of the subject matter or participate in classes at a level they have long surpassed. Or - even if they are native speakers - they have to take English lessons with beginners, without the opportunity to devote themselves to something beneficial for them at that time.

Not only the exceptionally gifted and hard-working are needlessly frustrated by the schools' indifferent or even hostile attitudes. The latest data show that 1/3 of pupils do not like school.

The flip side of the education system - i.e. "examples of bad practice" - which is usually not talked about, maybe not known or not wanted to be known, leads parents and teachers or lecturers to try to solve problems by themselves. So they look for schools that deviate from the grey average, or they create their own schools.

This is how the private Mensa gymnasium in Prague and the state School for Exceptionally Gifted Children in Bratislava, which is among the 10 most successful schools in Slovakia, were founded 30 years ago.

Thanks to the support of the family, the potential of many exceptionally gifted people was successfully realized. The promising young astronomer Jan Herzig, whom I mentioned last time, has been at the level of an adult expert for a long time, even though he is only 15 years oldⁱⁱⁱ.

Astronomy is his great hobby. Winning competitions is a side effect of his talent, motivation and hard work. He would welcome the meaningfulness of the school's requirements and the appropriate level of difficulty and quality of teaching, which is not always successful. It bothers

>>> next page

him, but he can deal with it. He does not fall into depression and does not need the care of mental health professionals.

Overall, however, the number of people in society who need the help of a psychologist or psychiatrist is increasing. The number of suicides, including those of children, has also increased. Many individuals are fragile and break down easily. They have not been trained for mental resilience, they have not been taught to overcome obstacles.

In contrast to this are the stories of those who do not give up and manage the impossible despite very adverse conditions.

Eleven-year-old Boženka Hradílková is just starting to study at the 8-year gymnasium Přírodní škola (Nature School).

The exceptionality is that Boženka suffers from SMA (spinal muscular atrophy) and since treatment was not available in our country, she should have lived for no more than two years. But Boženka's parents did not want to put up with that^{iv}.

Her story shows what a loving, very intelligent and selfless family can do when they want to save their child and prepare a future for her/him. On the website you will find videos documenting the parents' care and the progress Boženka was making despite her ongoing illness. Medicines were not available for Boženka in time, so now she is immobile. But she is lucky to have a family and a similarly accommodating school where this clever girl can get an education despite her disability. Her parents were responsible for the availability of SMA treatment for other children in the Czech Republic and also for screening in maternity hospitals, which will enable children with this disease to start treatment in time, so that they do not develop SMA^v.

This exceptional example shows what parents can achieve if they combine reason, emotion and extraordinary efforts, both in the search for information and in the fight with bureaucracy, and in the selfless and exhaustive care of Boženka. The amazing cooperation of the members of this intelligent, educated, sensitive and sports-oriented family also contributed to the achievement of the maximum possible success in this unequal struggle.

Similar to this family, the eight-year high school Přírodní škola (Nature School), founded and led by František Tichý, is also exceptional. Here, too, intelligence and feeling, but also understanding and ethics, come together^{vi}.

If all schools and all families functioned similarly, the world would look different. For such reasons, the Association for Talent and Giftedness /STaN/ emphasizes reason and feeling as well as expertise and ethics in its activities.

In conclusion, I will point out two examples of interesting and successful care for the gifted. Both fit the above qualities, both come from the USA and are connected to Prague^{vii}:

Both offer a high-quality, interesting and popular programme for gifted and motivated pupils and students. Both enable students to become excellent professionals one day. In the future, some of them may save other currently incurable patients or find procedures to make life easier for the differently-abled. The chance to fully develop personal qualities and intellectual potential, even the extraordinary that some individuals possess, should be a matter of course. It is in the interest of all of us.

Davidson Academy Online is a beautiful example of gifted education. We have been trying to prepare similar opportunities for our students for many years.

CTM academy was originally intended to be a Central European version of CTY^{viii}.

However, the then leadership of the Ministry of Education was not interested in supporting this plan. The long-term solid work of Jeanne Bočková and her team, the quality programme and the international success of students who completed CTM courses contributed to the improvement of the situation^{ix}.

Davidson online academy is also a very high-quality offer of education for gifted and motivated students. The connection with Prague is represented here by the very nice Jessica Potts, whom the participants of the online ECHA conference 2023 were able to meet. We are very pleased that we can meet Jessica in person in Prague^x.

In 2023, Dr. Potts was elected to serve as the NAGC Curriculum Studies Network Chair. Jessica and her husband live in the Czech Republic with their sons.

It is very useful to share different points of view and compare the experiences of accessing the gifted in different countries and continents. In time, even the Sisyphean work will bring positive results, as I hope some of the examples I mentioned show.

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ⁱ <https://svetvzdelani.cz/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.dghk.de/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.astro.cz/autori/jan-herzig.html>

^{iv} <https://www.bozenkasma.cz/en/>

^v <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10441294653-hyde-park-civilizace/9271-english-versions/37614-adriankrainer/>

^{vi} <http://en.prirodniskola.cz/>

^{vii} <https://www.davidsononline.org/> and <https://www.ctm-academy.org/>

^{viii} <https://cty.jhu.edu/>

^{ix} <https://www.ctm-academy.org/international-exams/zpravy/czech-high-school-diploma-gaining-an-internationaldimension>

^x <https://www.davidsononline.org/academics/faculty/jessica-potts-ph-d/>

The Role of Coordinators for Gifted Education

ABSTRACTS OF
PAPERS PRESENTED
FOR ECHA DIPLOMAS

MICHAELA GUTSJAHR, AUSTRIA

The present paper deals with the different roles coordinators for talent support carry out at their schools regarding teacher leadership and school development. These experts, who coordinate talent support activities at their schools, work in different fields of action and take over tasks in the domain of the promotion of excellence, dependent on the encouragement and support of their principals. Therefore, theoretical models concerning organisational and school development are equally considered such as the application of concrete fostering measures that aim at integrating the promotion of giftedness and excellence into the overall profile building policy and school culture.

Beyond this, the research considers an introduction into teacher leadership. On the one hand the definitions of teacher leadership enhance roles, responsibilities, fields of action, on the other hand they refer to the practical activities of staff at schools while operating in a wide range of formal and informal leadership roles. Teacher leadership is seen to be prominent to the success of local school improvement efforts.

The precondition of teacher leadership lies in the concession of participation and appreciation by the principal and in the creation of a supportive environment by the community of teachers, parents and other supportive staff at schools.

The paper focuses on the question of which active roles school coordinators for the support of giftedness and excellence take over as teacher leaders in successfully promoting the implementation of gifted programmes, what priorities they pursue, which roles they act out and which responsibilities can be listed when defining the scope of their work at school.

For the empirical analysis six coordinators of Austrian "Gymnasien" (i.e. grammar schools) in Lower Austria were interviewed as experts through guided interviews with a high amount of narration.

The outcome shows that the six coordinators serve as teacher leaders in their schools by taking over formal and informal roles, by exerting responsibilities that extend their classroom roles (as presented in literature by Altrichter, (2000), Schubert (2017) and Strauss (2020)) and by devoting energy and time for school improvement towards the

promotion of giftedness (Grips, 2022). Based on the findings, these experts in the domain of the promotion of the highly gifted and talented students, who gain their expertise from ECHA training programmes, do play a vital role not only in enhancing school and teaching performance, increasing collaboration by stimulating pedagogical discourses or counselling parents, pupils, colleagues and school leaders but also in policy making in schools due to their expertise, their formal and informal roles that influence the school improvement programmes. Therefore, their work should be financially appreciated.

Michaela Gutsjahr studied German and English in Vienna and is an ECHA teacher at the Gymnasium of Wieselburg in Lower Austria, a school that offers special programmes for the gifted and highly gifted children. At her school she has been the coordinator of and pedagogical researcher for all the programmes in gifted education for 11 years now and she has been teaching in the ECHA training programmes at the teacher training college in Baden for about 6 years. In July she finished her Master's thesis, working on Teacher Leadership.

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Methods for Identifying Mathematical Talent Overview and Examples

DOMINIK MARKSTEINER, AUSTRIA

Pedagogical diagnostics play a central role in providing optimal support for mathematically gifted pupils. With the help of structured giftedness diagnostics, talent search and identification of gifted students can be integrated into everyday school life. Here, the mathematics teacher plays a decisive role.

The aim of this paper is to find methods for identifying mathematical giftedness in childhood and adolescence and to shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of these methods. On the one hand, a rough overview of the procedures dealt with in science is given, on the other hand, concrete

examples of application for teaching practice are to be presented. To achieve this goal, scientific publications of the last few years were closely examined.

As a central result of this work, it can be stated that for the diagnosis of mathematical talent in childhood and adolescence, several different procedures should always be used. The only use of an intelligence test does not seem to be sufficient. Numerous German-speaking groups of authors therefore advocate a sequential procedure in which first a screening is carried out for rough selection, followed by status-diagnostic measures (tests, indicator tasks, questionnaires, etc.) and finally process-diagnostic measures (interviews, behavioural observations, document

analyses, etc.) should be carried out.

In summary, this work provides a solid theoretical basis for understanding giftedness and the associated models. The practical part provides insights into the implementation of a mathematics workshop day that aims to unleash the potential of gifted students. The insights gained can contribute to the targeted and effective support of gifted pupils.

Dominik Marksteiner has been a teacher for mathematics and physical education since 2017 and works now at BG/BRG Krems (Secondary school). He is also working as youth football coach (Rapid Vienna) and has just finished his ECHA-Certificate training.

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ABSTRACTS OF
PAPERS PRESENTED
FOR ECHA DIPLOMAS

Promoting Mathematically Giftedness Through Workshop Days in Primary Schools

VALENTINA SCHICH, AUSTRIA

This paper is dedicated to a comprehensive theoretical examination of the concept of giftedness as well as the different models of giftedness. In the practical part, an analysis of a mathematics workshop day is carried out.

In the theoretical part, different concepts of giftedness are examined in detail and considered in a differentiated manner. Numerous renowned researchers and academics such as Renzulli, Gagné and Heller are consulted to shed light on the multi-layered aspects of giftedness. In particular, Renzulli's three-ring model, which emphasises the correlation of creativity, task commitment and high intellectual ability, is critically examined. Likewise, Gagné's distinction between talent and giftedness is examined, with talent being

seen as abilities developed through specific encouragement. This theoretical foundation forms the basis for better understanding the identification and promotion of gifted individuals.

In the practical part of this work, an analysis of a mathematics workshop day is carried out. This is a special learning approach that takes place in heterogeneous groups and promotes creative and independent engagement with mathematical topics. The aim of this day is to develop the potential of the pupils and to consider their individual strengths and interests.

The evaluation of a questionnaire conducted after the workshop day provides information about how well it fulfils its purpose of supporting gifted pupils. Both the individual performance of the participants and their personal development are considered. The analysis makes it possible to gain insights

into the effectiveness of this special support approach and to identify possible areas for improvement.

In summary, this work provides a solid theoretical basis for understanding giftedness and the associated models. The practical part provides insights into the implementation of a mathematics workshop day that aims to unleash the potential of gifted students. The insights gained can contribute to the targeted and effective support of gifted pupils.

Valentina Schich, born in 1994, is a primary school teacher in Lower Austria. She started teaching three years ago at the PVS St. Raphael in Maria Enzersdorf. In summer 2023, she received the ECHA certificate as part of her ECHA Master Training at the University College for Teacher Education in Lower Austria.

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"Boredom will always remain the greatest enemy of school disciplines. If we remember that children are bored, not only when they don't happen to be interested in the subject or when the teacher doesn't make it interesting, but also when certain working conditions are out of focus with their basic needs, then we can realize what a great contributor to discipline problems boredom really is. Research has shown that boredom is closely related to frustration and that the effect of too much frustration is invariably irritability, withdrawal, rebellious opposition or aggressive rejection of the whole show."

FRITZ REDL, WHEN WE DEAL WITH CHILDREN