

Equity in Gifted Education: Improving the Representation of Students from Low Socioeconomic Backgrounds in Gifted Programmes

International cooperation in education and research

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Bureau Talent, CTYI Dublin City University, Heimerer College, PDC Thomas More, and Stichting VO Haaglanden have started their international Erasmus+ project Equity in Gifted Education. The kick-off took place at VO Haaglanden in The Hague, The Netherlands, on Thursday, November 30, 2023. Giftedness or cognitive talent is poorly recognised among young people from families with a migration background and/or with a low socioeconomic background. The partners in this project want to change this by making identification of cognitive talent fairer. To do this, cognitively gifted students will be offered an academic language programme and the partners are developing a parent participation programme.

Why?

The State of Learning and Equity in Education, the PISA 2022 report by the OECD¹ states that the socioeconomic status (SES) is still a predictor of academic achievement, meaning that students from high SES families perform better on reading, maths and science than students from low SES families. Hence, students from low SES backgrounds have lower chances to go to and complete a higher education study, leading to lower labour market outcomes. However, countries differ in how equitable their education is. Ireland comes out as one of the more equitable countries, whereas in the Netherlands and Belgium the achievement gap between high and low SES students is bigger than

the OECD average. In the Netherlands the achievement gap between high and low SES students on maths has even grown since 2018, whereas the OECD average remained the same.

What?

The Equity in Gifted Education project focuses on three themes:

- 1) identifying cognitive talent
- 2) academic language
- 3) parent participation

At the schools participating in the Equity in Gifted Education project, many students have a migration background and/or parents without a university degree in applied sciences/academic education. The teachers at these schools notice that many students, even if they are cognitively talented, lack the right academic vocabulary to answer test questions correctly. As a result, the students do not perform as well as they should be able to. Parents of these children may wish to help, but often lack the necessary skills to provide adequate support.

How?

The project examines the impact of the academic language programme, Woordenboost², which is part of an earlier Erasmus+ project (Creating Equal Opportunities at School³). With this programme, the partners want to increase students' opportunities to perform well in senior general secondary education and pre-university education, if the students have the capacity to do so. To measure this, the project uses the COVAT⁴ (Cognitive Skills Test, based on the CHC model of intelligence). The non-verbal part of this test has been discussed in earlier research which shows that it is less culturally biased^{5,6}, so that students with above-average intellectual capabilities are recognised, where that would not be the case in other tests. The academic language programme will also be translated into English and Kosovars and tested in Ireland and Kosovo.

The third part of the Equity in Gifted Education project is developing a parent participation programme to involve parents in the development of the special cognitive aptitude of their child. Where parents without a migration background and/or with a university of applied sciences/academic training often arrive quickly at the school door if their child is performing less well, this is usually not the case with parents of students from less advantaged backgrounds. It helps children when their parents are involved in their education. The parent participation programme is therefore intended to improve cooperation between parents and school.

>>> next page

¹ OECD (2023), PISA 2022 Results (Volume I): The State of Learning and Equity in Education, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/53f23881-en>

² <https://www.woordenboost.nl/>

³ <https://bureautalent.nl/projecten/ceos-opbrengsten>

⁴ 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.

⁵ Fontaine, J., Rosseel, J., & Agtmaal, E. van. (2016). Culturele Equivalentie en Vertekening in de Cognitieve Vaardigheidstest volgens het CHC-model (CoVaT-CHC) [Master's thesis Universiteit Gent]. https://libstore.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/002/304/979/RUG01-002304979_2016_0001_AC.pdf

⁶ Magez, W. (2017). CoVaT-CHC Basisversie: toetsing bij allochtone en autochtone leerlingen in de bovenbouw van het lager onderwijs. Universiteit Gent. https://www.thomasmore.be/sites/www.thomasmore.be/files/allochtonen_autochtonen_ugent.pdf

⁷ <https://www.vohaaglanden.nl/>

⁸ <https://www.rlvvc.nl/>

⁹ <https://mariscollege.nl/>

¹⁰ <https://thomasmore.be/nl>

¹¹ <https://kolegji-heimerer.eu/>

¹² <https://www.dcu.ie/ctyi>

¹³ <https://bureautalent.nl/en/>

The partners in the project are Stichting VO Haaglanden⁷ with their schools Rijswijks Lyceum/Van Vredenburg College⁸ and Maris College⁹. The PDC Thomas More¹⁰ in Antwerp is the developer of the COVAT and expert in the field of identifying cognitive talent; Heimerer College¹¹ in Kosovo brings its expertise in quality management; The Centre for Talented Youth (CTYI) in Dublin City University¹² has many years of experience in reaching cognitively gifted students from disadvantaged families and takes the lead in developing the parent participation programme. Bureau Talent¹³ is expert in the development of cognitive talent and has initiated and led the previous Erasmus+ project Creating Equal Opportunities at School.

The project will be finalised in 2026. In the next issue of ECHA News we hope to share our experiences with setting up and carrying out a project such as this. In the meantime, we are working on the continuation of the project. Are you interested in participating? Please contact Birgit Broekhoven: brh@rlvvc.nl

Dr. Leeanne Hinch is the Academic Coordinator for the Centre for Talented Youth (CTYI) at Dublin City University. Leeanne holds a PhD in Science Education from Dublin City University, specifically focussing on the preparation of pre-service science teachers. She has worked in the area of gifted and talented education for over 11 years. As part of her work with CTYI she manages a programme specifically for gifted students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Leeanne actively engages in research which will help to determine the supports required to help these students achieve their full potential.

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Lineke van Tricht is Director of Bureau Talent, experts in the development of cognitive talent (10-18 years), a European Talent Point and part of the European Talent Support Network. Lineke was initiator and leader of the former Erasmus+ project Creating Equal Opportunities at School. After having worked in secondary education as a teacher and school leader for 14 years, she started Bureau Talent in

2008. She became an ECHA-specialist in gifted education and is a freelance teacher at the Radboud International Training on High Ability (RITHA). Lineke is also working on her PhD at the Radboud University in Nijmegen.

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Birgit Broekhoven is Coordinator of Gifted Education and Teacher at Rijswijks Lyceum/Van Vredenburg College. This secondary school is part of VO Haaglanden and 80% of the students live in disadvantaged areas (ESCS). While working in secondary education as a teacher, she specialised in gifted education and took the training to become RITHA-specialist in Gifted Education. At VO Haaglanden, she leads the international Erasmus+ project on Equity in Gifted Education. Beside her work at Rijswijks Lyceum/Van Vredenburg College, she is a freelance coach/trainer at Bureau Talent.

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AND REALIZE THAT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL CLASS IS
RUNNING THE COUNTRY.**

KURT VONNEGUT