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Chapter 4

Gifted education in Europe: implications for policymakers and educators

Javier Tourón and Joan Freeman

> The role of Europe is extraordinary. It was dominant during the sixth through first centuries BCE, an equal partner with China and India for another five centuries, and overwhelmingly dominant from 1500 to 1899.... to unprecedented heights of accomplishments in every domain of human endeavour. We need to understand why. (Murray, 2014, pp. 596, 604)

If the interactions, endeavors, and productions of the many races and cultures that make up the population of Europe are indeed distinguishable from other areas of the world, this should be seen in its approach to the education of its most gifted and talented children. Scholars have examined the European approach within the world context and have consistently found much less reliance on selection via testing for special programs than in North America and less dedicated hard work by students than in the Far East (Cropley & Dehn, 1996: Freeman, 1998, 2002; Freeman, Raffan, & Warwick, 2010; Györi, 2011; Mönks & Pflüger, 2005; Persson, Joswig, & Balogh, 2000; Sękowski & Łubianka, 2015).

The countries of Europe, however, have become increasingly less distinct from each other in the way they approach gifts and talents. Four major influences account for this decrease in differences:

1. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1989: The once clear differences between the east and west of Europe have become blurred and there has been a strong shift away from the Soviet view of achievement as being for the benefit of the society toward a concern for the achievements of individuals for themselves.
2. Immigration: The influx of individuals from other cultures have brought different attitudes and beliefs which have made more subtle changes.
3. Attitudes toward exceptionality: A more accepting and inclusive view is evident in Europe.
4. The European Union: As most European countries are members of this body, its influence has had great bearing on educational concerns.

The professional network of academics and teachers uniting east and west Europe, the European Council for High Ability (ECHA), was set up in 1987 two years before the fall of the Soviet Union. Yet, no official concern for the education of gifted children was officially expressed until seven years later when the Council of Europe (a body for intergovernmental cooperation between 25 European states), issued recommendations (Council of Europe, 1994). However, it carefully avoided any accusation of élitism by emphasising that "special educational provision should ... in no way privilege one group of children to the detriment of the others" (p. 1).

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The Council of Europe recommended

- legislation be recognized for the special educational needs of gifted children;
- research on identification, the nature of success, and reasons for school failure;
- provision of information on gifted children and in-service training for all teachers;
- establishment of special provision for gifted children within the ordinary school system;
- concerted efforts to avoid the negative consequences of labeling someone as gifted and talented; and
- promotion of debate and research among psychologists, sociologists, and educators, on the vague and relatively undefined giftedness construct.

ECHA has made considerable progress toward achieving these aims. Since 1994, the association has provided a 1-year full-time teacher-training course leading to an ECHA advanced diploma. This is offered in colleges and universities across Europe, producing well over 1,500 graduates, many of whom have sought further graduate training. The diploma is also available outside of Europe, in countries like Peru, where there have been more than 200 graduates.

The changes in Europe have brought losses and gains in advanced achievement. For example, although "Russian writers, musicians, scientists and chess players continue to be held in high esteem" (Bobo, 2015, p. 214), only four Russian universities, three of them technical, have made it into the top 300 in the world (Times Higher Educational Supplement, 2016). Individual Russian scientists, though, often continue to produce stellar work outside of Russia, such as the Nobel Laureates who discovered graphene at Manchester University in the United Kingdom (Geim & Novoselov, 2007).

Although some Soviet states have seen less recognition of their advanced individuals, one former Soviet state, Hungary (where Erno Rubik invented the Rubik's Cube, László Bíró perfected the ballpoint pen, and chess is a required component of school curriculum), is leading the world in the development of the European Talent Support Network, which is accredited by ECHA (Fuszek, 2014). Initiated in 2007, network hubs called talent centers, (i.e., resource centers) are now operating in an array of community associations, such as churches, schools, media outlets, businesses, and universities. By April 2015, there were 1,405 talent centers in 14 countries. Since 2016, ECHA has allowed applicants from outside Europe to join the network. Talent councils, such as the Roma Talent Support Network, coordinate local efforts. The aim of these networks is to expand and exchange ideas that lead to the adaptation of best practices in education. Furthermore, the networks seek to distribute and apply scientific findings about the promotion of talent through interactions involving students, teachers, mentors, parents, and experts. These goals are undergirded by the belief that about 80% of knowledge is tacit and best transmitted via networks with a further benefit of societies working together—not an easy feat in a world where teachers usually work in isolation.

Europe has been at the epicenter of conversations about the Flynn effect. Flynn (2012) has stated that "Raven's data for the Netherlands, France and males in Israel show huge adult gains over the whole curve" (p. 51). Dutch conscripts provided a prime example gaining 7 points per decade across 30 years between 1952 and 1982, almost one standard deviation. This cannot be explained genetically, but may be explained by the increasing opportunity for cognitive enrichment from greater educational opportunity that has occurred in these areas. Students familiar with information technology, Flynn concluded, are progressively more competent at manipulating abstract concepts such as hypotheses, analogies, and categories. It is not so much that children's basic natural intelligence is going up as it is the way intelligence is being used that increases scores (Freeman, 2014). The long-term effects of such societal influences are yet to be seen in terms of intelligence.

Longitudinal studies of gifts and talents extending beyond formal education are rarely published in Europe. In fact, the only one with scientifically matched nonidentified and nongifted control samples is the 35-year UK study of 210 individuals by Freeman (2013b). Freeman found that relatively few precocious children attained adult eminence. Indeed, for Winner (2014), the gifted child never

gets to world-class creativity because practiced expertise gets in the way. In other words, those much bruited about 10,000 hours of practice essential for expertise (Ericsson, 2014) can be a handicap.

In Europe, the terms *gifted* and *talented* may be used as synonymous with outstandingly high-level performance, whether across a range of endeavors or a limited field, or as the developmental potential for outstanding excellence. Perhaps most important, gifted children are no longer stereotyped as emotionally distressed (Freeman, 2013a), but are far more likely to be seen as emotionally healthy with unique abilities that warrant appropriate educational support. Freeman (2012) has also articulated a unique quality of true giftedness—a positive creative quality that differs from what is measureable on tests and is difficult to quantify.

European educational provision for high potential

Across Europe, arguments about precise definitions and the identification of the gifted and talented have been discussed for more than a century, and will doubtless continue. They are seen in the plethora of terms for gifts and talents, which may influence school curricula. Neither psychologists' reports nor IQ scores are typically used as the basis of identification for gifted education (Freeman, 2005). Opportunity differences have also been at the center of discussions about supporting children with high potential, particularly in terms of political debates about elitism and egalitarianism (Tourón & Pfeiffer, 2015).

Worldwide, education for excellence is influenced by the major split in cultural attitudes toward the relative importance given to genetics and environment (Freeman, 2015). In the Far East, environment is dominant; every baby is seen as having similar potential. Achievements are seen in their rates of development, largely within the power of each individual to fulfil through hard work. Western attitudes consider potential as relatively fixed, so only a tiny percentage can be selected as gifted and talented (Pfeiffer, 2015). Consequently, the vast majority of nonselected children (perhaps 90%) are implicitly incapable of high-level achievement and may not be given access to the means to show of what they are capable. But Western ideas are changing toward greater inclusiveness and concern with potential (Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Worrell, 2011).

Europe generally uses the Western approach of the dominance of genetic influences, though much less so than the United States. Yet, the Eastern-style approach to education also works well in the highly developed egalitarian countries of Scandinavia, notably Finland, a frequent top scorer in the Program for International Assessment (PISA; Sahlberg, 2012). In fact, Finland is shifting it's curricular approach even further away from the dominance of subject-based to phenomenon-based teaching, which involves communication between students working in groups to solve real-world problems (Leat, Lofthouse, & Thomas, 2015).

All children in Sweden receive the same education until the age of 16, and cultural belief guiding the educational policy is that no children should consider themselves superior to any other (Persson, 2011). Despite this practice of homogenous education, Sweden, along with Denmark, more recently appears to be investigating services for individuals with high potential. The Norwegian government has also set up a group of researchers to explore this issue, though in terms of the potential of all children (Education Act, 2007)

Scandinavian initiatives related to giftedness are generally explored through private opportunities associations for teachers and psychologists. Similar efforts to address the needs of gifted and talented individuals are not affiliated with formal or legislative decree and are typically sought on a voluntary basis by parents. For example, in Italy these are run by International Mensa, an organization for gifted people, in France there is a long established voluntary group supported by psychologists and in Belgium there are several parent organizations.

Generally, national school systems in Europe recognize high potential in pupils, but mostly opt for inclusive education for their most able, as recommended by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). National legislation, therefore, often contains language addressing the rights of all children to an education which should adequately support and

meet their abilities and interests, rather than specifically designating education for the gifted.

German legislation explicitly states that each student shall be provided with an education reflecting the child's talents, interests, and inclination—regardless of a child's heritage or economic situation. About a third of all German students attend academic-track schools (Baumann, Schneider, Vollmar, & Wolters, 2012). The country has about 30 schools providing special gifted education, many being part of the East German communist legacy, in addition to special classes in standard schools.

In the United Kingdom, 7% of all children attend selective private schools, institutions which produce a disproportionately high number of the country's outstanding achievers (e.g., in 2014, 44% of Oxford University entrants came from private schools (Oxford University, n.d.). Schools within the state-maintained system are expected to provide appropriate educational opportunities for the most able students. Trained teams of school inspectors provided by the government Office for Standards in Education regularly visit state-maintained schools to ensure that the most able students are educated appropriately. At the secondary level, inspectors visit secondary selective grammar schools and also monitor ability streaming in comprehensive high schools.

Special education for the gifted and talented in Spain is now articulated in law with the Ley Orgánica de Mejora de la Calidad Educativa and Royal Decree 943 from 2003, so that intellectual giftedness is now a category of special educational needs. Children may now begin school early, be accelerated, have the right to psychological assessment and the use of special curricular measures and guidance. Nevertheless, Tourón (2012) pointed to a gap between legislation and actual school provision on the basis of the number of identified children and the number of programs offered by schools.

Despite the broad adoption of services for the gifted in the countries described previously, any form of acceleration of advanced children remains a contentious practice across Europe, and, therefore, is rarely practiced and sometimes even prohibited. In Portugal, acceleration via grade skipping more than twice during basic school education must have special permission from the Secretary of Education (Oliveira & Almeida, 2007). Heinbokel (2015) identifies the rarity of acceleration in Germany, with the highest recorded percentage of gifted children being in Hamburg, with just 0.07% of the students considered gifted.

The gifted Education in Europe survey

The Gifted Education in Europe Survey (GEES) was designed to shed light on current European educational provisions for the gifted. Respondents were from organizations concerned with the education of the most able, notably members of ECHA, nonmember participants in its 2014 conference, and others involved with the gifted—Europeans with involvement and information. The sample of respondents was a convenience sample within ECHA countries.

Questionnaire

On the basis of the field of gifted education, as represented in the literature described previously, an online questionnaire was developed and piloted by experts in the field. The survey designers modified the questionnaire on the basis of minor modifications suggested by the field reviewers (see Table 4.1). The final version was deployed in the summer of 2015 via an online platform to 850 scholars and practitioners in European countries; 324 responses were received (full details of the study are available at http://www.javiertouron.es/2016/02/gees.html).

The questions included dichotomous responses, complex matrices, and Likert scales with space for additional open-ended responses. The questionnaire was presented in English because translation into the very many respondents' languages was neither possible nor needed, as English is widely understood in Europe, particularly in text. The survey was disseminated in March 2015, with two subsequent reminders that it would be closed early June. Across very different cultures, whether Russian, Italian, Spanish, or German, opportunities for integration and flexibility of provision were examined and compared.

Responses

Of the 324 respondents, the highest percentages were from Spain (18.2%), The Netherlands (14.8%), Slovenia (6.5%), and Germany (6%). The remaining

Table 4.1

Questionnaire's seven main areas

Section	No. of questions
Demographic issues	4
Definitions, legislation, and guidelines	6
Identification criteria	5
In-school provision	6
Out-of-school provision	3
Teacher training	3
Attitudes toward gifted education	2

responses accounted for less than 5% of respondents, and some respondents referred to only a part of their country. Figure 4.1 represents the percentages of responses per country. Their occupations included parents, representatives of associations, consultants, interested people, and university students (see Table 4.2). There seems to have been a steep rise in European interest in the area of giftedness and talent, as 23.51% of respondents had been involved in this field for more than 15 years, whereas 38.24% reported involvement for only 5 years or less. It is likely that more recent enthusiasts are also younger.

Definitions, legislation, and guidelines

The first part of the questionnaire was devoted to verifying the existence of legislation concerning the gifted and talented, establishing whether such legislation is mandatory for schools, and determining the existence of a definition and guidelines regarding identification. For ease of reporting, countries have been grouped geographically. Northern European countries do not seem to have legislation, with the exception of the Baltic Republics and Russia, nor does this region seem to mandate identification in most cases. In countries of the south and east, legislation is more common, and in cases where it exists, it is usually mandatory. Only nine of the countries appear to have a definition of giftedness, and

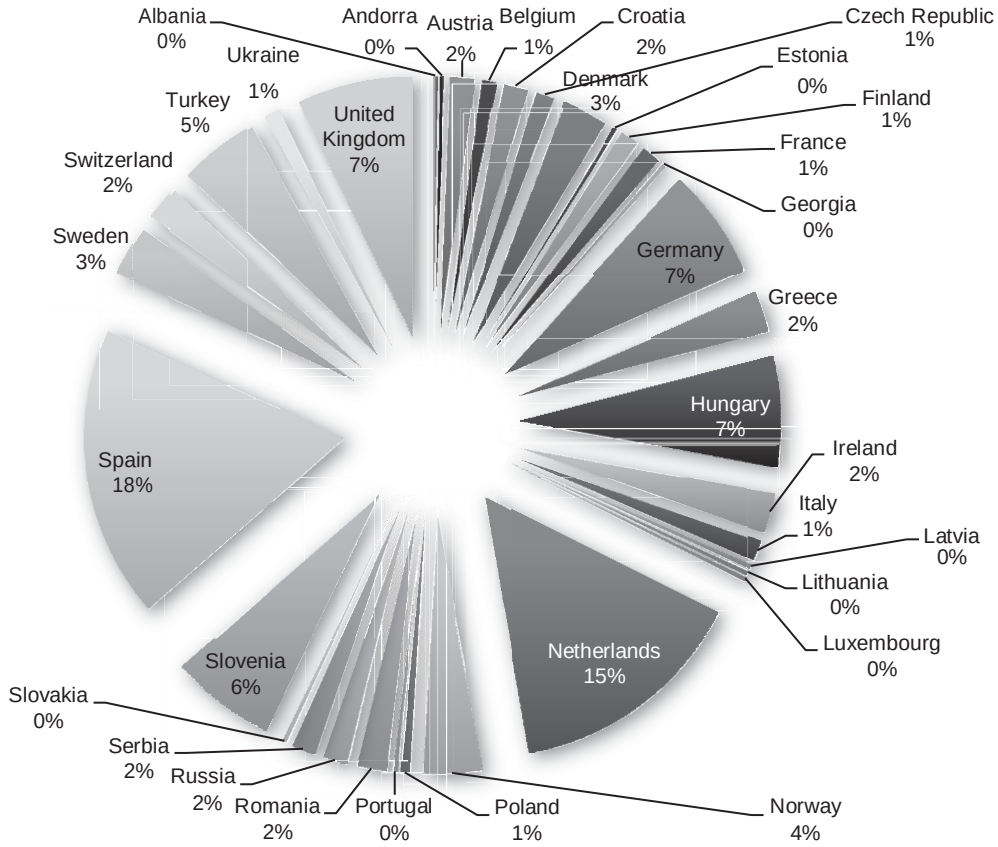

Figure 4.1. percentage of respondents for the gifted Education in Europe survey by country.

Table 4.2

respondents' roles in gifted Education

Role in gifted education	% of answers	No. of responses
Regular teacher	20.99	68
Special teacher program	15.43	50
Administrator	12.65	41
Tutor	12.96	42
Psychologist	12.65	41
Researcher	25.31	82
Total	100	324

identification guidelines appear to be established in only seven countries.

It was seen that across Europe, there are considerable differences in legislation and guidelines for educating the highly able in schools. Among the respondents, 60.85% indicated that their countries had some legislation—even if only 44.22% of it was compulsory—but only 33.16% reported having identification guidelines. However, even within the same geographical area, there was some disagreement on what identification guidelines were available, and only 36.36% of respondents were aware of a formal definition. In a few countries, schools do not have any specific policy to identify and help the most able students, and in most cases, the schools do not receive extra money to do so (see Table 4.3).

identification

Identification of children as gifted appears to be based mostly on relatively subjective nominations, by teachers, and to a lesser extent parents, classmates, and sometimes self-nominations (see Table 4.4). Using objective measures, IQ is important or very important in 14 countries and measures of differential aptitudes much less important. In most countries, identification decisions were based on academic achievement and performance data rather than potential. Such findings indicate that among countries that have identification processes, the primary focus is on the general domain mode—consistent with Spearman's "g" model (Spearman, 1927)—in the conception of high ability, which differs from the Eastern and the emerging Western developmental approaches described previously. These findings are very similar to those found in a worldwide survey (Freeman, Raffan, & Warwick, 2010).

More than half (53.46%) of responding teachers said that selection for gifted services had afforded theses students extra educational provision. Some offered their own definitions of giftedness, whereas others used unadapted definitions of North Americans in the field, such as those established by Marland (1972) and Gardner (1983).

But foreign imports in education do not always work, such as the English National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY), a generously government-funded model of the program based at the Center for Talented Youth in Baltimore, MD. In fact, in an objective review, NAGTY was found to have a negative effect on teachers' attitudes to special education for the gifted (Teacher Training Resource Bank, 2010). At the end of its 5-year contract, it was promptly shut down. However, many of the GEES survey respondents said a local version of definitions and selection procedures were currently in their government's pipeline.

In response to the question "Is identification of the gifted and talented in your country/region fully inclusive of all students?" respondents provided some surprising data on the sometimes random selection of students for gifted identification. Only 22.93% said that selection decisions were for all children, as one respondent wrote, "Theoretically everyone has a chance [to be identified for giftedness], but in reality it is not always the case." As another respondent wrote, "In some schools teachers are asked every year to nominate children. Some teachers never nominate any." Some respondents

Table 4.3

percentage of affirmative answers to the Existence of legislation, definitions, and guidelines for identification in gifted Education in Each country

Country	*N*	Legislation	Compulsory	Definition	Guidelines
		Northern Europe			
Denmark	9	37.5	57.1	0.0	0.0
Estonia	1	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Finland	4	25.0	33.3	0.0	0.0
Ireland	8	0.0	20.0	20.0	0.0
Lithuania	1	100.0	—	100.0	0.0
Norway	12	20.0	20.0	10.0	0.0
Russia	5	75.0	0.0	25.0	25.0
Sweden	10	50.0	66.7	0.0	0.0
United Kingdom	23	14.3	7.7	28.6	21.4
		Middle, Western, and Southern Europe			
Austria	5	80.0	20.0	40.0	60.0
Belgium	3	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
France	4	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0
Germany	22	46.7	26.7	26.7	21.4
Italy	4	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Luxembourg	1	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Netherlands	48	44.4	46.2	17.4	9.1
Spain	59	93.1	67.9	31.0	48.1
Switzerland	7	50.0	50.0	33.3	33.3
		Eastern Europe			
Croatia	5	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
Czech Republic	4	75.0	25.0	75.0	75.0
Georgia	1	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Greece	8	66.7	33.3	66.7	16.7
Hungary	22	84.6	40.0	66.7	55.6
Poland	2	100.0	50.0	100.0	100.0
Romania	6	75.0	50.0	25.0	25.0
Serbia	5	80.0	100.0	25.0	50.0
Slovakia	1	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Slovenia	21	100.0	91.7	100.0	91.7
Turkey	16	90.9	27.3	81.8	81.8
Ukraine	3	66.7	0.0	0.0	0.0

Note. *N* = no. of responses.

wrote that a child's approved social behavior could be influential in selection, as with one respondent who said that "every child is discussed at length at school, though talented ones just gain better grades if they've behaved well." Alternatively, bad behavior could also result in identification, as "children are only identified if they are presenting with problem behavior and the psychologist knows enough about giftedness to spot it." But then, in the words of one respondent, "Sadly, low status and foreign kids are still missed. As well as kids with low incomes."

Where the gifted were officially identified, this was most frequently within the boundaries of a specific cut off. On any measurement, 68.94% of respondents chose the top 5% of children, 17.42% chose the top 10%, and the rest of the respondents suggested a wider selection beyond a 10% cut-off. Alternatively, where children were not identified for gifted services,

Table 4.4

Main identification criteria in gifted Education in Each country

Country	*N*	IQ	DAT	AA	PA	TN	PN	Peer N	Self N
				Northern Europe					
Denmark	9	4.6	2.4	4.2	3.0	4.0	2.4	2.2	1.8
Estonia	1	2.0	2.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	3.0	1.0	2.0
Finland	4	1.5	2.0	2.0	1.5	2.0	2.0	1.5	1.0
Ireland	8	3.5	3.0	4.5	3.8	3.3	2.5	1.8	1.5
Lithuania	1	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	3.0	1.0	1.0
Norway	12	3.3	2.1	4.0	2.4	3.0	2.7	1.8	1.7
Russia	5	1.3	1.7	4.0	3.3	3.3	2.0	2.3	2.3
Sweden	10	2.0	2.0	3.8	4.0	3.0	2.4	2.2	2.8
United Kingdom	23	2.5	2.4	4.9	5.0	4.0	2.6	2.1	2.3
				Middle, Western, and Southern Europe					
Austria	5	1.3	2.3	3.3	3.6	4.6	4.6	4.3	4.6
Belgium	3	5.0	1.5	4.0	2.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	1.5
France	4	5.0	3.0	3.5	3.5	2.5	2.5	1.5	2.5
Germany	22	4.1	2.6	4.0	3.3	3.8	2.8	1.6	2.1
Italy	4	3.5	3.8	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.2	3.2	3.8
Luxembourg	1	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	0.0
Netherlands	48	4.1	2.8	3.3	3.3	3.8	3.4	2.2	2.4
Spain	59	3.9	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.5	3.1	2.6	2.4
Switzerland	7	4.3	2.8	3.8	3.8	4.2	3.3	2.4	3.0
				Eastern Europe					
Croatia	5	3.5	3.0	3.0	3.5	2.5	2.0	2.0	1.0
Czech Republic	4	3.7	2.5	3.3	4.0	3.3	2.5	1.5	1.7
Georgia	1	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0
Greece	8	5.0	1.7	4.2	3.2	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.5
Hungary	22	3.2	3.7	3.6	4.4	4.1	3.5	3.0	3.8
Poland	2	5.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	4.5	4.0	2.0	3.0
Romania	6	3.7	3.5	4.7	4.5	2.5	2.5	1.8	1.7
Serbia	5	4.4	2.6	4.4	3.6	3.8	2.6	2.6	3.6
Slovakia	1	5.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	2.0	1.0
Slovenia	21	4.6	3.2	3.5	2.9	4.6	2.9	2.5	2.4
Turkey	16	4.8	2.6	3.7	2.6	4.1	1.9	1.6	2.2
Ukraine	3	3.3	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.3	2.7	3.7	3.3

Note. *N* = no. of responses, averaged values from response scale; IQ = intelligence quotient; DAT = differential aptitude tests; AA = academic achievement; PA = performance assessment; TN = teacher nomination; PN = parent nomination; Peer N = peer nomination; Self N = self-nomination. Scale values are as follows: 1 = Not important at all; 2 = Not very important; 3 = Moderately important; 4 = Somewhat important; 5 = Very important.

respondents wrote, "We do not have a formal process in place for identifying them" and "We do not identify, as we have no programs or help to offer. Being gifted/talented is not considered an issue in Norway."

In only 18.83% of cases, children had a say in designing their own education, and 52.60% had such opportunity only occasionally. In response to whether teachers attended to students' voices in the design of services, 24.44% of respondents said they did, 60.00% said teachers did occasionally, and 15.56% indicated that teachers disregarded students' involvement in intervention development. In Finland, Luxembourg, Austria, and Lithuania, students were said to be consulted 100% of the time, but in

Russia, Ireland and 10 others countries, gifted children were never consulted for input.

In general, 85.71% of teachers make life-changing decisions about students' gifts and talents. Notably, 68.92% of teacher respondents had not experienced any special training even though opportunities for in-service training were available to them. As 36.24% of teachers said, there did not seem to be much enthusiasm for the extra training, not least, as they were not likely to be credited for the extra work. The financial cost was addressed by teachers, one of whom noted that "there is quite a host of training available that can be paid for with school training budget," whereas another stated that "the Special Education Support Service provides in-service but this must be requested. I don't know how much in demand this is but I suspect the vast majority of schools have not requested it."

In-school provision

Table 4.5 shows the situation of European countries in relation to some curricular modifications provided to the most able students. Regarding enrichment, respondents indicated that approximately 18 countries incorporate this strategy *sometimes* or *often* (values 3 or higher), whereas the acceleration is offered with the same level of frequency in at least 10 countries. The most common acceleration strategy noted is course skipping; though this was noted as an unpopular practice in some countries, it was thought to happen in private schools. According to one respondent, "there are a few teachers who, on their own initiative, have supported [an] accelerated learning pace for their gifted students", although another respondent reported that "grade skipping had been used for a long time but has fallen out of favor." To illustrate the lack of popularity for acceration, one respondent added that "there are some forms of acceleration accepted but rarely used," and another stated that "too much [instructional decision making] depends on the individual teacher; there are no regulations or educational recommendations from Dep of Ed. or any other instance."

The personalization of learning, clearly an optimal consideration among students who typically have a higher learning rate than their classmates of the same age, does not—on the basis of responses—seem to enjoy great popularity in many countries. The same is true for online programs and pull-out programs. Therefore, it is difficult to understand how educators can respond appropriately to high capacity students, if the available approaches are not put into practice. Perhaps this lack of curricular modification is related to the fact that identification is not inclusive or systematic and that high ability is mainly identified with having a high performance.

Out-of-school provision

The opportunities offered in countries outside the school curriculum are shown in Table 4.6 and appear to be present in most countries, with some significant exceptions, such as Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and France. Overall, it seems that some opportunities are present in all the countries. We can say that the attention to the needs of gifted students is given outside of school, which is more common than attention given inside of school. This is positive but also a cause of concern, because school is where children spend a most of their time.

Generous out-of-school provision for the gifted and talented was widespread in many countries, as described in the variety of enrichment and advanced teaching. Respondents generally preferred this type of educational provision for their most able students. One teacher wrote, "Enrichment is used more frequently in so-called 'additional' [classes] but not so much during 'regular' classes." Other respondents noted the existence of various options, including special university courses offered to gifted students, Olympiads, enrichment, "Saturday schools," camps for gifted, and several extracurricular activities. The extent a child could take advantage of these opportunities depends on where they live. Additionally, there may be variability in offerings, as noted by one respondent: "All these programs are offered by private organizations and they are charged." Another respondent noted such opportunities are "generally very low key and occasional". In one case, students were "excluded due to not being Spanish". However, there is always something readily available: "It's not all specific for gifted but they accumulate at kids' university programs, at private courses, etc." One respondent spoke to the frequency and responsiveness of such programming: "We offer out-of-school programs

Table 4.5

in-school provision Measures offered by country according to the scale indicated (averaged values)

Country	*N*	Enrichment	Acceleration	Personalization	Online programs	Pull-out programs
			Northern Europe			
Denmark	9	2.4	2.2	2.2	2.4	2.2
Estonia	1	4.0	3.0	3.0	5.0	4.0
Finland	4	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Ireland	8	1.8	2.4	2.2	2.0	1.6
Lithuania	1	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	2.0
Norway	12	2.0	2.3	2.0	2.0	1.9
Russia	5	3.7	2.7	2.7	2.3	2.3
Sweden	10	2.7	2.4	3.0	3.0	2.5
United Kingdom	23	3.1	2.8	2.9	2.6	2.4
			Middle, Western, and Southern Europe			
Austria	5	3.7	3.3	3.0	2.3	3.7
Belgium	3	2.5	3.5	2.0	2.0	2.5
France	4	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	3.0
Germany	22	3.0	2.9	2.5	2.2	2.8
Italy	4	2.5	2.0	3.0	1.5	2.5
Luxembourg	1	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Netherlands	48	3.8	3.2	2.9	3.2	3.6
Spain	59	3.0	2.7	2.6	1.9	2.2
Switzerland	7	3.5	2.8	3.5	2.0	3.8
			Eastern Europe			
Croatia	5	2.5	2.5	3.5	3.0	3.0
Czech Republic	4	3.0	2.7	2.7	1.7	2.0
Georgia	1	1.0	2.0	3.0	—	4.0
Greece	8	2.5	1.5	2.5	1.5	2.3
Hungary	22	3.2	2.6	2.9	2.8	2.9
Poland	2	3.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.5
Romania	6	3.3	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.0
Serbia	5	3.5	3.0	2.8	2.3	1.7
Slovakia	1	3.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Slovenia	21	3.6	2.1	2.9	2.0	2.5
Turkey	16	2.0	2.4	1.9	1.8	2.9
Ukraine	3	2.3	2.3	2.0	2.7	2.0

Note. *N* = no. of responses. Scale values are as follows: 1 = *Never*; 2 = *Almost never*; 3 = *Sometimes*; 4 = *Frequently*; 5 = *Very frequently*.

from October to June, twice a month, directed to high ability students and their parents." In only 31.94% of cases, outside-of-school activities were accepted as academic credits for higher education.

Attitudes about gifted education

In the last section of our questionnaire we wanted to ask about attitudes toward a series of statements, because we felt such responses could aid in establishing a broad understanding of the general situation in Europe regarding giftedness and related services.

Every respondent to the questionnaire either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that there is a need for teachers to be trained to assist the most able students. However, the respondents also commonly believed that the gifted are likely to have emotional difficulties, a belief most frequently found when teachers have a less specific training (see Neihart, Pfeiffer, & Cross, 2015).

Table 4.6

out-of-school provision Measures offered in Each country according to the respondents

Country	*N*	WP	SP	OL	HP	UN
			Northern Europe			
Denmark	9	40.0	80.0	40.0	40.0	60.0
Estonia	1	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Finland	4	50.0	100.0	50.0	100.0	100.0
Ireland	8	100.0	40.0	40.0	100.0	50.0
Lithuania	1	100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Norway	12	14.3	42.9	14.3	14.3	28.6
Russia	5	66.7	100.0	66.7	100.0	66.7
Sweden	10	0.0	16.7	0.0	0.0	16.7
United Kingdom	23	62.5	75.0	62.5	62.5	87.5
			Middle, Western, and Southern Europe			
Austria	5	100.0	100.0	50.0	100.0	100.0
Belgium	3	100.0	50.0	50.0	100.0	100.0
France	4	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Germany	22	70.0	90.9	27.3	100.0	100.0
Italy	4	100.0	75.0	25.0	100.0	50.0
Luxembourg	1	0.0	100.0		100.0	100.0
Netherlands	48	70.6	100.0	47.1	70.6	87.5
Spain	59	50.0	52.6	38.9	60.0	26.3
Switzerland	7	50.0	80.0	60.0	60.0	80.0
			Eastern Europe			
Croatia	5	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Czech Republic	4	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Georgia	1	0.0	100.0	100.0	0.0	—
Greece	8	50.0	66.7	50.0	50.0	66.7
Hungary	22	63.6	100.0	81.8	72.7	88.9
Poland	2	50.0	100.0	100.0	50.0	100.0
Romania	6	75.0	100.0	0.0	50.0	25.0
Serbia	5	75.0	75.0	50.0	100.0	100.0
Slovakia	1	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Slovenia	21	87.5	100.0	28.6	100.0	62.5
Turkey	16	100.0	100.0	14.3	71.4	71.4
Ukraine	3	100.0	66.7	66.7	100.0	100.0

Note. Figures represent the percentages who responded "yes." *N* = no. of responses; WP = weekend programs; SP = special programs; OL = online courses (own language); HP = holiday or summer programs; UN = university or college programs or other measures.

Fortunately, on the basis of our survey's findings, school principals are, in general, very supportive of teachers in schools where there is an established practice of meeting the needs of the most capable students. Yet, as can be seen in Table 4.7, there does not seem to be established funding for schools so that they can adequately attend to high capacity students.

Research and associations

Many European institutes of higher education, universities, and teacher training institutes are engaged in research, usually within their own geographical area. The outcomes are not always published in English or in journals that would give a wider range of researchers access to new findings and conclusions. ECHA was often

Table 4.7

teacher attitudes to several statements by country

Country	Teachers need special educational provision for the G/T	Teachers can cope with educating the G/T in the normal classroom without help	The G/T are likely to have emotional problems	The head of schools or departments help the staff to provide an appropriate education for G/T pupils	The schools have a policy for the most able students	Extra money is given to the schools for the education of the G/T
			Northern Europe			
Denmark (9)	5.0	1.8	4.2	1.6	1.6	1.4
Estonia (1)	5.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Finland (4)	4.0	3.0	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.0
Ireland (8)	4.8	1.6	2.5	1.4	1.4	1.0
Lithuania (1)	5.0	1.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	1.0
Norway (12)	4.5	2.1	3.1	1.6	2.0	1.8
Russia (5)	5.0	2.6	3.3	2.3	1.6	2.3
Sweden (10)	5.0	1.5	4.5	2.2	1.6	1.0
United Kingdom (23)	4.6	1.9	3.1	3.0	3.8	1.4
			Middle, Western, and Southern Europe			
Austria (5)	4.0	2.5	1.5	2.5	2.5	3.5
Belgium (3)	5.0	1.0	2.5	4.0	2.0	1.0
France (4)	5.0	2.0	1.0	3.0	4.0	1.0
Germany (22)	4.6	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.5	2.1
Italy (4)	4.8	2.5	4.0	3.8	3.0	2.8
Luxembourg (1)	4.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	4.0
Netherlands (48)	4.7	2.2	2.7	3.2	3.1	3.1
Spain (59)	4.7	2.4	3.1	2.8	2.2	2.5
Switzerland (7)	4.4	2.8	3.0	3.4	3.2	3.0
			Eastern Europe			
Croatia (5)	4.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.0
Czech Republic (4)	4.7	1.7	4.0	2.3	2.7	1.7
Greece (8)	5.0	1.8	4.0	1.8	1.5	1.3
Hungary (22)	4.2	2.7	3.3	3.6	3.9	3.2
Poland (2)	5.0	1.5	5.0	3.5	3.5	3.5
Romania (6)	5.0	1.8	4.8	2.5	2.3	1.8
Serbia (5)	3.8	2.5	2.8	2.8	2.0	1.5
Slovakia (1)	4.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Slovenia (21)	4.6	1.9	3.1	2.8	4.0	3.3
Turkey (16)	5.0	2.3	3.0	2.4	1.9	2.4
Ukraine (3)	4.3	2.0	3.3	3.7	3.0	2.3

Note. No. of responses per country are in parentheses. G/T = gifted/talented child. Scale values are as follows: 1 = *Strongly disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neither agree/nor disagree*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly agree*.

mentioned by respondents as meeting a critical need for connecting individuals and sharing information, notably through ECHA conferences and the peer-reviewed scientific journal, *High Ability Studies*. The many associations for the gifted and talented run by teachers, parents, and interested

volunteers across Europe were also identified by respondents as central to bringing people together (a list by country can be found at http://www.javiertouron.es/2016/02/gees.html).

Summary and conclusions

Education administrators in most European countries seem to be aware that gifted and talented children need special provision to reach their potential. Their concerns can be seen in directives to schools where children with gifts and talents are valued, sought, and provided with appropriate educational services. However, these concerns are neither always obvious, nor necessarily evident in terms of actual official legislation. In many countries, notably in Scandinavia, the identification of gifted and talented children in education is purposefully avoided. Instead, educational aims are expressed as personalized and child-centered to help every child realize their potential. The preferred educational approaches in those countries where gifted education is overtly avoided are through in-school and out-of-school enrichment. When it is seen as necessary, a child may be offered extra teaching in a specialist area such as mathematics or music. Indeed, in theory, if each child is considered valuable and provided with an appropriate education, the most able will reach their potential.

As could be expected, through this GEES survey we learned of distinct differences of approaches to giftedness and gifted education among countries. But we also found that respondents from the same country had different impressions of their national attitudes and legislation, even as to whether they existed or not. The vital message here is for greatly improved presentation and communication of ideas and directives by authorities to the people who are expected to carry out their instructions. The same can be said of researchers' communications with legislators and practitioners.

Achievements during the school years can be measured by school grades, external examinations, and international competitions. Apart from Finland, which slipped from first to sixth in PISA, Europe has not typically made it to the top few ranks of school achievement, as these ranks are usually occupied by countries or cities in the Far East. But that selection is questionable, as some results are given only for cities. Does Macao or Shanghai represent the whole of China? What is more, those standardized international competitions can also be considered a limited exercise of learned school-type achievement on the basis of memory with little creative element.

School performance is never the end result in a life, however important it may seem at the time. It is more helpful to take a wider look at the big picture of European success in postschool terms, such as the economic stability of nations, the number of Nobel laureates (not necessarily related to stellar school achievement), progress in engineering, developments in medicine, and international recognition of performance and presentation of the arts. Outcomes can be identified. At base, it could be the number of books published or the smooth running of cities and the achievement of social justice.

Members of the European Union, as well as virtually all national and local policy makers, have to negotiate and coordinate finance and help for special educational concern for the gifted and talented. Specific hurdles result in very uneven provision for the gifted:

1. The terms of identification so often refer to school-type achievement, but it would be much less wasteful to put greater emphasis on discovering potential. Such a broadening of scope would be more inclusive, potentially minimize concerns about elitism, and assist isolated highly able chil- dren from educationally poor backgrounds.
2. The inevitable constant changes of government ministers and senior officials means that policies are often short term and influenced by individual personalities.
3. Dedicated funding is neither sure nor consistent, obliging officials to compete from sources which may be inappropriate, such as classroom equipment.
4. Some schools may resist special concern for the gifted whether through misunderstanding or ideology. Without motivated teachers in the classroom, it is difficult to get any policy into action.
5. Ministers do not always receive clear descriptions from researchers and practitioners about the pupils they are being asked to support.

However, some ways to overcome those hurdles have been identified:

1. Schools and teachers could be rewarded with status and/or money (government or commerce) for recognizing and providing for their highest potential pupils. This would mean schools would be held to account at the top end of pupil performance as they are for all other children's school progress.
2. Provision for the highly able should be integral to normal schools while also offering specialist help in pupils' outstanding domain-specific areas. Options include setting, accelerated learning, and extension studies.
3. Normal teaching with a creative imaginative and open-minded approach is more likely to encourage the most able to expand their creative potential than memorization.
4. Out-of-school activity networks should be widely available within and across countries to bring like-minded students together. These could be through master classes, specialist schools, universities, professional bodies, sports clubs, orchestras, art classes, the Internet, etc.
5. Costs need not be a major barrier to initiatives aimed at supporting highly able students in non-selective state schools. But where money is short, activities for the gifted and talented can seem to be more of a rationing device for popular trips than a means of high-level education.
6. Learners should be allowed to move in and out of the gifted and talented category. This would enable them to experience high-level learning in particular areas with the possibility of trying others.
7. Educators in different countries have much to learn from careful study of the policies and practices of others. But unmodified acceptance of programs from elsewhere can fail.

The evidence from this snapshot GEES survey indicates that most European education authorities do not select a small percentage of children for special gifted education. Identification criteria can also be somewhat vague and not always based on up-to-date developmental knowledge. Most important, although in Europe in-school special education is not reliably available, the gifted and talented do have considerable access to a wide range of enrichment and extension courses to an extremely high level as part of the resources available to all.

For the gifted and talented, the way forward in Europe, and perhaps the rest of the world, is the personalization of learning. We already have the tools to adapt education to the particular needs of every student. It is of paramount importance to continually encourage educational practice away from didactic teaching and memorized learning toward a wider-based learner-centered approach. This implies flexibility in teaching, respect for the variety of pace and depth of student learning and the interest and motivation of every child, while providing and encouraging a creative approach.

Technology is racing ahead with a wide array of possibilities (Freeman, 2014; Tourón & Santiago, 2013; Tourón, Santiago, & Díez, 2014). Highly able children also have access to international electronic interaction with like-minded students. If the processes of education were really to embrace this expanding paradigm, many gifts and talents, which might have been lost, can flourish.

In response to Murray's query posed at the outset of this chapter—as to how Europe has managed to provide the world with such "unprecedented heights" of scientific and artistic achievements—it is probable that it comes from providing the opportunities to do so to its brightest children. At its best this richness goes with encouragement of an adventurous spirit in learning and its creative application. Fortunately, many once entrenched social barriers have almost disappeared so that a far higher proportion of potentially gifted and talented children have access to the education they need to develop their potential, although the most creatively gifted may sometimes still have to function outside the mainstream.

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