

NORWAY



After decades of unstirred waters in catering for the gifted in Norwegian education, some stones have finally been thrown into the pond during the last year. It is far from a storm rising to overthrow the one-size-fits-all schooling we have been living with, but at least the short term pain and the long term torment of the gifted and able students losing interest in school, has come to the attention of our government. The commission on "high achievement students" delivered a public report on the matter in September this year. As part of this work, the National Knowledge Center for Education delivered a literature study aiming to make a synthesis on what is known about gifted students. There has also been a few seminars and workshops to gather and present national literature and knowledge in the field, but no further actions are announced at this point. But this said, some of us are not too optimistic as we also had some setbacks during the year. The Danish Mentika school applied for a permit to run a school for gifted children in Tønsberg, just south of Oslo. This was by one vote accepted by the city council, but refused by the Directorate of Education. A plea was sent to the Ministry of Education, but has not had a response. Thus, the school is not able to start this fall. Due to Norwegian regulations the next opportunity is in August 2017. In 2010 came a government report on upper secondary education, promoting acceleration and enrichment for the most able students. It was suggested that as many as 10% of the students should be encouraged to take subjects at the high school level or grade skip. Six years later this is rarely known in most schools, and the city of Oslo is the only place where it has been implemented to some degree.

We are following the situation with great anticipation and hope to have more encouraging news to report in the next edition.

Submitted by Jan Terje Bakler

SPAIN



The advances accomplished in Spain in the last year have been very important. In our previous information related to the education of the gifted and high intellectual abilities in Spain, we pointed out the importance of doctoral thesis defences, national and international research, as well as collaboration through the different education departments and provincial delegations. Moreover, the Official Master of Psychological Therapy for Children and Youth was created at the Public University Miguel Hernández with a specific module for the evaluation and intervention of gifted students. The program is based on the Yolanda Benito's PhD (2016), and on-line courses are approved by the Education Ministry, as the ones imparted by the "Huerta del Rey" Centre, etc.

It is important to point out the economic aids from the Education Ministry given to the families of these students that are involved in specific programs (BOE from 6 August, 2016). Another important note is the legislation of national scope about the Flexibilization of the Stages of the Educational System through the Royal Decree 943/2003, which regulates the conditions for making the duration of the levels and the educational system for the gifted students flexible. (See <https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2003/07/31/pdfs/A29781-29783.pdf> for more information.)

On occasion, the media tends to point out the more sensationalist side, forgetting that we are talking about children, youth, and families. In this sense, we have seen appropriate to favour a more realistic comprehension of the educational, social, and personal needs of these gifted children. We created a YouTube channel oriented to the media, press, parents, teachers, psychologists, etc.

Visit our video "Does the gifted children exist?" in our channel. Based on a true story (case study) described in the book "Superdotación y Asperger" by Yolanda Benito. This story is about a gifted child in his first years, from the moment he was a toddler until he is five years old. (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddpKOC0x2bE> for the video.) For reading the whole story of the child visit <http://www.centrohuertadelrey.com/files/upload/articulos/capitulo-1-en.pdf>. This is the first part of a series of videos with the final purpose to raise awareness about the educative and social and emotional needs of gifted children through case studies. Spanish, English, and Chinese versions are available. We also recommend you read the Recommendation 1.248 from the Europe Council (1994): "On education for gifted children - relative à l'éducation des enfants surdoués."

Spain report continued on next page

Much of the responsibility for the current lack of creativity and innovation can be found in traditional educational systems that teach to a single right answer to a problem. All studies in the past fifty years indicate that creativity must be assumed as part of learning, so that, when faced with a problem, our students and future creators know how to use the most effective strategies, and use curiosity and divergent thinking as a natural part of the learning process.

To achieve these objectives we have considered appropriate the objective of introducing a generalized education of creativity in our schools along with all other educational interventions that these children receive curricular enrichment, workshops, individualized plans, and so on.

Submitted by Juan A. Alonso and Leopold Carreras-Truñó

SWEDEN



Looking back at the past two years of World Gifted newsletter issues, it appears no report from Sweden has been given to the WCGTC. Therefore, I start or restart the contribution of news from Sweden by briefly looking back a few years. Since 2014 several important things have happened on several levels in the Swedish system benefitting the gifted and talented.

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, SALAR, is an organization that represents and advocates for local government in Sweden. SALAR initiated a collaboration between seven Swedish municipalities. Among other things this collaboration led to creation of a material about gifted pupils and their needs that was released in 2014. This material was aimed as an action plan for pedagogical staff in schools on all levels from teachers to politicians. However, it was spread and read most likely by all people in Sweden with some interest in giftedness.

At the same time a school psychologist raised her voice for the gifted children, and the media gave her relatively high attention. The contribution of this school psychologist, in combination with other events made parents of gifted children react. It also increased the awareness on giftedness among people in general.

In academia the interest for giftedness increased side by side by the mentioned events, although mostly connected to mathematics education. Since 2008, research from four PhD students has been given attention. These works have also been given relatively large attention by the media. Two of those four have completed their studies and are now doctors. All four are active in spreading scientific knowledge about giftedness mostly to pedagogical staff. In a few universities it is possible for teachers or special pedagogic teachers to read courses on giftedness. But it is not possible, for example, to complete a bachelors or a masters degree in giftedness. It is confusing that since the mid 1990s we have had an international well known researcher in giftedness in Sweden, but the politicians have not listened to him or paid attention to his research. Maybe it is difficult to fight alone.

In 2014 the national agency of education decided to construct support material for teachers about giftedness and gifted education. This material was released in spring 2015. This was a very important step for gifted children in Sweden. It meant that they were recognized and that it was accepted on a governmental level that they need special support in education.

In 2016 the material released by SALAR in 2014 was revised. The main change was that it now also includes the recognition of gifted children in early ages. The material now states that gifted young children in kindergarten also need to be recognized and supported.

A lot more is happening in Sweden that is positive for gifted children, more will come in future newsletters.

Submitted by Elisabet Mellroth

Delegate reports continued on next page