

Editorial

The purpose of the present issue of the *CEPS Journal* is to provide an insight into the current education policies in different European countries concerning the education of gifted learners and the implementation of these policies in practice. The main focus is on understanding of various intra- and intercontextual factors that have an impact on a particular national gifted education policy. A broad overview of this topic in recent years (e.g., EADSNE, 2009; Györi et al., 2011, 2012; Monks & Pfluger, 2005; Van Tassel-Baska, 2013) indicates, in addition to certain obstacles, a number of dynamic developments that could synergise through cooperation at the international level, building an infrastructure architecture that has not yet been – and perhaps could not be – fully achieved at the national level. The main aim of reflection is, therefore, to encourage critical discussion on the possibility and meaningfulness of developing a European policy on gifted education.

This can be understood as an important step towards the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee *Unleashing the potential of children and young people with high intellectual abilities in the European Union* (released in 2013). From the national gifted education contexts presented in the articles of the present issue, it is possible to conclude that, in spite of particularities in conceptualisations and approaches in practice as well as differences in political and financial support and specificities in national networking, some general trends are gradually emerging in terms of paradigmatic change, e.g., from disabilities, needs and help to potentials, rights and a motivating learning environment in order to achieve learning excellence, thus integrating the topic of gifted education more and more into broader national education and sociocultural discourse. The same importance is evident in the second and the third parts of the present issue, which are dedicated to teacher education for teaching for excellence and to fostering research-based evidence, including comparative analysis, in order to gain clearer insights into the concepts of the programmes and the effectiveness of their implementation in practice.

This issue includes focus articles from Austria, Germany, Hungary, Scotland and Switzerland. These countries were carefully chosen to form a European umbrella, as they have different cultural roots and a different tradition of gifted education. In order to maintain the education policy orientation, the invited authors were asked to follow the same structural path : (1) a presentation of the national context and background underlying the main national motivations for the development of the national gifted education policy; (2) the basic structural elements, including goals and partners, as well as professional,

research, financial, etc. support; (3) the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the particular national policy; and (4) a conclusion outlining the vision of the particular national policy presented, and perhaps also the mechanisms involved in sustaining, monitoring, optimising and evaluating its implementation in practice.

The first article, *National Policies and Strategies for the Support of the Gifted and Talented in Austria*, written by Claudia Resch, focuses on the recently published national document “The White Paper Promoting Talent and Excellence” (2010 in German and 2011 in English), which follows a contemporary systemic, holistic and inclusive national gifted education approach, including various horizontal and vertical coordination networks. In the article, the author outlines the main developments in theory and research in gifted education, as well as the broader sociocultural reasons that led to the new national gifted education strategy. In this context, it is meaningful to note the wider political support of the developments presented. For example, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Culture and Science established a unit for the provision of the gifted and talented as early as in 1996, which continues to have a key impact on gifted education provision in Austria today. Furthermore, an inter-ministerial steering committee, known as the *Task Force*, was founded in 2008, with experts from the Ministry of Education and Women’s Affairs, the Ministry of Science, Research and Economy and the ÖZBF. This committee meets several times a year to develop and discuss strategies for gifted education and research on giftedness in Austria, and to determine ways for their implementation.

The second article, *Gifted Education and Talent Support in Germany* written by Christian Fischer and Kerstin Müller, discusses an analysis of the current gifted education strategies in Germany at the level of the 16 federal states, which vary in concepts and promotion principles, as well as in measures, provision and support. Due to very weak – or even non-existent – federal networking, Germany still lacks a common federal policy on gifted education. However, as the authors point out in their concluding remarks oriented towards the development of a national strategy, gifted education and talent support in Germany is increasingly becoming an integral part of discussions concerning national education, society and politics, and has recently also received increasing support from the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs.

The third article, *An Overview of the Current Status of Talent Care and Talent Support in Hungary* written by Csilla Fuszek, focuses on the national strategy of the National Talent Programme, which has a tradition of some 20 years, and provides an insight into the development of the very unique Hungarian talent support cooperation model. The author presents and analyses

the main strengths of various national efforts to support talent development through the last century, highlighting Hungary's traditionally exclusively public system of initiatives, which has gradually been enriched by various NGO activities as well by the involvement of gifted students in a range of competitions on the national and international levels. Since 2008, national talent support has been a long-term public issue recognised by the Hungarian Parliament.

The fourth article, *Ability as an Additional Support Need: Scotland's Inclusive Approach to Gifted Education* written by Margaret Sutherland and Niamh Stack, discusses how the Scottish approach to "gifted education" is influenced by historical, philosophical and political narratives that are firmly rooted in a belief that education is a right for all. The authors highlight the rights-based model of education in relation to high-ability students, defined as students with additional support needs in the Education Act from 2009. The establishment of provision through local authorities is overseen by the Scottish Government. The Curriculum for Excellence and the document GIRFEC are the basic national frameworks for providing an appropriate curriculum for individual learners, including highly able learners aged 3–18.

The fifth article, *Gifted Education in Switzerland: Widely Acknowledged, but Obstacles Still Exist in Implementation* written by Victor Mueller-Opplinger, stresses the fact that Switzerland is a nation whose economy relies on the knowledge, innovations, excellence and expertise of its population. There are still no mandatory national policies on gifted education, nor is there a national strategy; the author therefore focuses on the philosophy and other important aspects of the contemporary realisation of local- or regional-based integrated gifted education, which is related to supplementary arrangements for special needs.

The Varia section of this issue represents a "complement" to the first six articles by highlighting a practical view of dealing (indirectly) with the same problem, i.e., highly able students in mathematics. The research article reports on a three-year Finnish follow-up study on the development of the problem-solving skills of students from grades 3–5. Anu Laine, Liisa Näveri, Maija Ahtee and Erkki Pehkonen discuss their findings regarding the stability of the correlation between the students' ability to develop different solutions and their ability to solve a problem within the framework of teacher competencies to promote the students' understanding of the concepts being investigated.

The third part presents a review by Chuing Prudence Chou of the book *Comparative Education Research: Approaches and Methods, Second Edition*, edited by Bray, M., Adamson, B. and Mason, M. (2014, Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong and Dordrecht: Springer.

xvi + 453 p. ISBN: 978-988-17852-8-2). The reviewer summarises the text by highlighting the value of the book, concluding that “...will be of great value not only to researchers of comparative education research but also to policy makers and students who wish to understand more thoroughly the array of methodological approaches available in comparative education research”.

Last but not least, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to the participating authors, as well as to the reviewers for their valuable and constructive comments, all of which helped to improve the quality of the present issue of the CEPS Journal.

PETER CSERMELY AND MOJCA JURIŠEVIČ

References

- EADSNE: European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. (2009). *Gifted students: A survey of educational policy and provision*. Retrieved from <http://www.tehetspont.hu/dokumentumok/gifted.pdf>
- European Economic and Social Committee (2013). Opinion of the EESC on Unleashing the potential of children and young people with high intellectual abilities in the European Union (own initiative opinion). *Official Journal of the European Union*, 2013/C. Retrieved from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2013:076:0001:0007:EN:PDF>
- Győri, J. G. (Ed.). (2011). *International Horizons of Talent Support, I*. Magyar Tehetségsegítő Szervezetek Szövetsége.
- Győri, J. G. (Ed.). (2012). *International Horizons of Talent Support, II*. Magyar Tehetségsegítő Szervezetek Szövetsége.
- Monks, F. J., & Pfluger, R. (2005). *Gifted Education in 21 European Countries: Inventory and Perspective*. Retrieved from http://www.bmbf.de/pubRD/gifted_education_21_eu_countries.pdf