

IRELAND



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The education policy in Ireland is currently one of inclusive education. This means that students with special educational needs are taught within the mainstream school system. The provision of education for gifted and talented students is the responsibility of individual schools, ideally with support and guidance provided by the Department of Education. Gifted education is a relatively new concept here, being neglected from any policy until the 1990s. The Special Education Review Committee was established in 1993 and it was created to seek advice and expertise from those in the field of special needs and to advocate for best practice. Their report in 1993 provided the first Irish definition of giftedness. Shortly thereafter, The Irish Education Act of 1998 formed the legislative framework for the provision of primary and secondary education in Ireland, and it stated that students were entitled to an education appropriate to their needs and abilities. It has been a slow process drawing attention to the needs of these students within Ireland. However, it is clear that progress is being made in this field in terms of programmes, research, and teacher training.

As it stands, there is no specific curriculum for gifted students, but schools are encouraged to provide differentiated and

challenging learning experiences for these students. Some schools may offer extension classes or special programmes, but this is not currently the case in all schools. In Ireland the responsibility for the evaluation of primary and post-primary schools falls to The Inspectorate. This is a division housed within the Department of Education and its inspectors are all highly experienced teachers. In recent years The Inspectorate has been including gifted education within their school evaluations and encouraging teachers to provide appropriate challenges to highly able students while promoting best practice. We consider this to be an incredibly positive sign, as schools will do their best to achieve a positive report from their school inspections and improve based on any feedback given.

Outside of the mainstream school system, The Centre for Talented Youth, Ireland (CTYI), is a non-profit organisation based at Dublin City University (DCU) that provides educational programmes for highly able students and remains the largest provider of gifted education programmes in Ireland. Since its establishment in 1992, some 90,000 students have participated in classes run by CTYI. CTYI offers a range of programmes, including summer courses, online classes, and Saturday classes, that are designed to challenge and inspire gifted students. CTYI has five major outreach initiatives: The Young Student programme caters for children aged 6 to 12 years, supporting 3,000 students per year. The Older Student programme caters for up to 2,800 students

aged 12 to 17 each year. The Centre for Academic Achievement (CAA) works with socio-economically disadvantaged students from local DEIS schools and typically caters for roughly 180 students per year. The Early Research & Projects Network (ERP) is a new programme which started in 2021 and now has over 100 students per year. Finally, the Early University Entrance (EUE) is a programme for Transition Year students and has over 600 students per year. The overarching goal of CTYI is to cater for the academic and social needs of high ability students based on ability, rather than age, by challenging and stimulating students at a level and pace more suited to their abilities, allowing students to maximise their potential.

In addition to the programmes for students offered by CTYI, they regularly conduct research in the field of gifted education so that they can improve upon their programmes in response to these findings, and to better advocate for the needs of gifted children on a national and international level.

The future for gifted education in Ireland looks promising. There is still more work to be done, in particular incorporating gifted education studies into the training of in-service and pre-service teachers here, but we are hopeful that this is on the horizon.

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SWEDEN



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SWEDEN

A claim in common in reports from Sweden often mentions the difficulties we face as researchers in a strongly egalitarian school context. As probably is the case in many countries, the pandemic has also had a negative effect on both research and teaching in giftedness. With a great deal of teaching and research trying to recover

from having been transferred to on-line, new projects have been postponed and any initiatives outside of regular teaching practices have been put on hold. On the other hand, on-line teaching and meetings have also enabled people to meet without having to travel. In such a vast country as Sweden, this is of significance.

Hopefully, now being able to leave behind such a precarious situation there are positive news to report. One such piece is that a significant step forward in developing an awareness of giftedness and gifted education in Sweden has

been taken. In the last months of 2021, it was announced nine doctoral positions oriented towards research in giftedness have been granted. The positions are shared between three universities, Karlstad, Mälardalen and Stockholm. This has enabled the field to broaden, not only geographically but also in terms of what profile the PhD positions will cover. The four studies for a thesis published in the country so far, are all exploring didactical dilemmas of teaching mathematically able students. Now, research covers inclusion,

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