

A good practice from Nijmegen, the Netherlands: CBO (Centrum voor Begaafdheidsonderzoek) Center for the Study of Giftedness

The Center for the Study of Giftedness (CBO Centrum voor Begaafdheidsonderzoek) is a university institute of Radboud University, Nijmegen, in the Netherlands. It was established by Prof. Franz Monks in 1988. From 1988 to 1997 CBO was part of the Department of Developmental Psychology, later it became part of the Department of Special Education, and from 2002 to 2013 CBO was part of the Academic Centre for Social Sciences. From 2014, CBO is part of the ITS, the institute for applied social sciences linked of the Radboud University in Nijmegen, which specializes in social scientific research, policy advice, company research and knowledge transfer.

The CBO mission

CBO is a financially self-sufficient international expertise center in the area of giftedness. Based on a firm scientific approach, they contribute to the professionalization of gifted education and to the realization of the support of gifted children and adolescents by offering parents and teachers information, workshops and courses about exceptional learning and developmental demands of gifted children. In addition, CBO staff, led by Dr Lianne Hoogeveen, strives to an educational policy, in which a structural differentiation in the education of gifted children is ensured. The goal of CBO is to contribute to the optimal development of gifted children and young adults, by means of support and scientific research on giftedness. All the members of the CBO staff are experienced professionals in the field of giftedness: psychologists, special educators, teachers and a linguist.

The combination of science and practice is a key element in CBO's functions: it is a university institution, involved in academic research and teaching at the University of Nijmegen, but also a consultancy center, open for individuals and schools with several forms of counselling.

The four core functions of CBO are:

1. Client care (diagnostics, counselling and support)
2. Education
3. Development of teaching material and teaching methods
4. Scientific research.

Client care

Parents and teachers often face questions like: How can I offer a teaching material that fits to the child's abilities? Is he or she gifted at all? Does giftedness have anything to do with the behavioral and concentration problems? How can we support our children in fulfilling their potential? What can we do to help them with managing difficulties they face at home or at school? Is it good for a child to skip a year or not?

If a parent or a teacher feels that he or she needs guidance in questions like these, they may ask for help from the CBO. What kind of support does CBO offer for these questions?

Diagnostics

Parents who need an insight about the skills and characteristics of their child can sign up for an interview and/or an extensive diagnostic examination. A psychological diagnostic examination takes a full day. Diagnostics may include the measurement of IQ, attention, social-emotional development, creativity, executive functions, working memory, fear of failure, motivation, self-esteem, or any other relevant areas. A school visit is possible, to get an even more detailed picture of the environmental conditions of the child. The findings of the examination are discussed with the parents and, if necessary, with the child or adolescent. The parents will receive a written report. If a child has been examined before, or if an examination is not needed, parents can request just a consultation visit. Also when the child is very young (until first grade), such a visit is recommended.

Cognitive (behavioral) therapy

For children, adolescents and adults, CBO offers support based on cognitive (behavioral) therapy. Treatments are problem-focused and briefly planned. The main idea of cognitive therapy is that it is possible for the client to discuss his/her interpretations of certain situations with a therapist. A negative view on these situations may lead to anxiety- and/or stress-related problems, depressions, undesired habits, social dysfunction, etc. With cognitive (behavioral) therapy, the client and the therapist investigate together the negative mentality and search for a better functioning one. When working out new views and thoughts, specific cognitive exercises are used and homework assignments are done.

"Vooruitweklab" (Enrichment class)

Gifted children between 6 and 16 years can visit the *Vooruitweklab* (Enrichment class), a specially decorated classroom filled with challenging learning and playing materials. Students work together in a course of 10 meetings in a small group, in which they make difficult, challenging (and entertaining!) assignments, evaluate their own and others' work, try out new games and make new friends.

It also offers students the possibility to recognize and name their own learning style, within a fitting social environment. Working together with other children who use different learning styles, are also discussed as part of the learning process. Since 2014, the

Vooruitwerklab is organized on schools in the Netherlands. It does no longer take place at CBO.

Parent courses

Parent courses are also offered for interested parents, because raising up gifted children may be challenging. How can a parent respond to the child's questions in an appropriate way? How can one help to ensure that the child is developed optimally? What can we do in the case of underachievement? An important answer to these questions lies in a good communication with the child. Therefore CBO offers a specialized course about "Talking to gifted children" to parents. During the 1,5 hour-long meetings a short theoretical introduction is provided followed by a training session, to work on practical implementation. At the end of each meeting a homework assignment is given that is discussed on the next meeting.

Consultancy for schools

CBO offers various services not only to individuals but also to primary and secondary schools. Teachers are often faced with large classes, children with diverse background and problems, and the expectation of differentiated teaching. All children have a right to optimal development, as do the most intelligent ones. So one of the objectives of CBO is to encourage education that leads to permanent and structural differentiation and appropriate education for gifted students. According to PISA studies, outstanding students in the Netherlands perform relatively less than excellent students in other countries, so it is particularly needed to pay attention to the quality of teaching and performance of the 20% best performing students.

Group screening

Group screening is a very popular service of CBO. The CBO has over 15 years of experience in providing over 90 high schools with early group screening support and services all over the Netherlands. There are three main reasons to perform group screening at high school entry:

1. *To provide children with a good start in secondary school in order to release their potential.*

With the right support for students in high school, approaching them at the right level of development, it is possible to release their full potential. The right support may consist of enrichment classes, fast-track education programs, broadened education programs, contact with peers and other activities schools can develop and provide. But who to offer these activities to?

When teachers are aware of the capabilities of a student, they can approach them at the right level. By screening all students entering high school, and discussing the

results with the teachers and mentors, students' potential, strong and weak areas can be made much clear.

CBO offers various tests in the screening procedure, to make differentiation between students in the highest levels of secondary education. Comparing test results with the average in the tested group of peers rather than with the norm (national) average offers a better insight into students' capabilities within the examined group. Over 15 years of experience, unrivalled expertise in interpretation, explanation and support for teams of teachers underpin the success of this approach.

2. *To prevent drop-out.*

Students who are not approached at an adequate level, may face behavioral and learning problems later, so it is important to identify their potential early in high school. Enabling teachers to identify students with more potential and approach them at the right level may help to avoid drop-outs.

CBO helps high schools to provide right support and guidance to children who are not able to transform high ability into high performance. Students who perform under their potential may eventually drop out. Offering these students insight into the difference between their personal ability and performance, may motivate them to try harder to achieve a performance that matches their potential. Also, offering adequate challenge (at the right level, aligned with their interests) to gifted students may motivate them to perform at their level of ability as well.

In fact, there are many ways by which students can be supported to overcome the obstacles that block their performance. CBO offers a number of services to schools and students in this area, for example cognitive behavioral therapy, which is a very successful method.

3. *To develop talent in young population for the benefit of society.*

Group screening at high school entry prevents drop-out of students and offers them a good start in high school to develop their full potential. CBO enables the full talent to benefit society in later life, whilst improving the quality of students' life at high school.

Group screening takes place at school. The results are processed at CBO, followed by a written report and consultation with the teachers. During this discussion, the test results of each student will be compared to his/her school results. In addition, the teacher's impression of the particular student will also be compared to the results. This way, it may be possible to determine if a student can benefit from an enrichment project, or if he/she is underachieving at school, is being educated on an appropriate (cognitive) level and if he/she feels comfortable at school. The results may also lead to further psychological examination of a student and/or an interview with his/her parents.

Post-initial training

There is a clear trend in the Dutch education to pay more attention to talent support. It means that there is an increasing need for expertise in the area of giftedness, to ensure scientifically based practice and theory, to provide optimal guidance and support for the gifted. Training opportunities offered by the CBO reflect to this need.

Training to ECHA-Specialist in Gifted Education

In association with the European Council for High Ability (ECHA), CBO has developed a full training program, focused on offering professional support to gifted students. This training bundles the fields of psychology (particularly the psychology of learning), pedagogy and didactics. The purpose of the training is to expand the knowledge on identification and supporting gifted students in primary and secondary school, or in advisories. This training is accessible only to applicants who have a Master's degree or a doctoral degree. During the course concrete and practical school situations, scientific methods of research, description and evaluation are used, and practice is always tested against scientific theories on the subject. The training is completed with an internationally accepted diploma: European Advanced Diploma in Educating the Gifted.

Presentations, workshops and customized study meetings

CBO offers schools advice and practical tips for supporting gifted children. The staff at CBO leads presentations and workshops at schools about gifted students and their specific support. At the request of schools or partnerships, CBO organizes customized study meetings. School teams can attend to a general meeting (what is giftedness, how can it be recognized, what are possible educational adjustments), or to more specific meetings (about eg. accelerating, enrichment, underachievement, etc.). It is also possible for partnerships to plan a customized course, in consultation with CBO. These courses will be offered at the Radboud University campus or at a different location.

Development of teaching materials and teaching methods

Vooruit! ("Forward!")

Gifted students need a rich variety of content, teaching methods and tools. The teaching material of *Vooruit* is developed to offer them the extra challenge they need. *Vooruit* is a booklet published by Kluwer in cooperation with CBO. It appears three times a year, containing teaching materials for gifted students at primary schools. The theoretical framework of *Vooruit* is formed by the triarchic theory of intelligence by Sternberg (analytical, creative and contextual thinking skills). Several articles and interviews that may be interesting to teachers and/or supporters can be found in *Vooruit*, too.

Within the *Vooruitwerklab* (the enrichment class) materials are tested and new materials are developed in an applied setting.

Research

Offering an up-to-date and scientifically-based diagnostics and client care requires a firm research support. Cooperation between primary, secondary schools and higher education makes a good basis for it. The topic of giftedness has also become to one of the priority research lines for the country, with the support of the Ministry of Education. CBO's goal is to provide research results about the development and support of excellent students, and also to influence state of affairs in the Netherlands in this field.

CBO investigates various aspects of giftedness: for example the self-concept of gifted children; the effects of various changes in education on cognitive and socio-emotional development of students; the relationship between intelligence and creativity; the well-being of gifted students in secondary education; on exit abilities and giftedness. Number of books, book chapters, scientific articles, dissertations, theses, reports, instruments and brochures were made by or in collaboration with CBO staff.

International collaborations

CBO works closely with the following foreign universities:

- Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität in Münster (Duitsland) (ICBF (Internationales Centrum für Begabungsforschung)
- University of Glasgow (Schotland) (Scottisch Network for Able Pupils, SNAP)
- University of Iowa (V.S.) (Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development)
- Yale University (V.S.)
- Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Peru.

In addition, CBO co-operates with universities and other (educational) institutes in Europe (Italy, Slovenia, Austria, Estonia, Serbia, Bosnia, Hungary, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, France) on an incidental basis.

CBO (Centrum voor Begaafdheidsonderzoek– Center for the Study of Giftedness) is a good example of how research, education and practice can be harmonized in order to provide a professional guidance for the gifted.

For more information visit their website at <http://www.ru.nl/its/cbo/> !