



Equity in Gifted
Education



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Overview of the Identification Approach

Looking beyond traditional identification

Many gifted learners remain unnoticed in schools. Traditional identification methods often rely on teacher nominations, high academic achievement or parental advocacy. While these approaches may identify some gifted students, they can overlook learners whose abilities are less visible because of language barriers, socioeconomic disadvantage, cultural differences, underachievement or limited educational opportunities.

The Equity in Gifted Education (EGE) project was established to address this challenge. Our goal is not simply to identify more gifted students, but to identify gifted students more equitably.

A strengths-based approach

The EGE project starts from the belief that cognitive potential is distributed across all groups in society. Every school contains students with high learning potential, regardless of their linguistic, cultural or socioeconomic background.

To recognise this potential, schools need identification procedures that minimise bias and focus on students' reasoning abilities rather than on acquired knowledge or academic performance alone.

Universal screening

Instead of relying solely on referrals or nominations, the EGE project promotes universal screening wherever possible.

Universal screening means that all students within a selected age group are given the opportunity to participate in the identification process. This approach reduces the

influence of unconscious bias and increases the likelihood of identifying students whose abilities might otherwise remain hidden.

Research has shown that universal screening leads to a more diverse and representative identification of gifted learners.

The CHC Model of Intelligence

The EGE identification approach is grounded in the Cattell–Horn–Carroll (CHC) Theory of Cognitive Abilities, one of the most widely accepted models of human intelligence.

Rather than viewing intelligence as a single score, the CHC model recognises multiple broad cognitive abilities that contribute to learning and problem solving.

Within the EGE project, particular attention is given to Fluid Reasoning (Gf)—the ability to solve unfamiliar problems, recognise patterns and think flexibly in new situations. Fluid reasoning is considered one of the strongest indicators of learning potential because it is less dependent on prior educational experiences than measures of acquired knowledge.

The COVAT-3 (EGE Module)

To assess students' cognitive potential, the project uses the COVAT-3 (EGE Module), developed by Thomas More University of Applied Sciences.

The EGE module consists of two adaptive reasoning tasks:

- Pattern – assessing inductive and deductive reasoning through pattern completion.
- Shapes – assessing quantitative reasoning by identifying relationships between symbolic figures.

Students first complete instructional videos and practice items before working through the adaptive assessment. The digital format allows each student to work at an appropriate level of difficulty while reducing unnecessary testing time.

Detailed instructions for administering the assessment are available in the COVAT-3 (EGE Module) Administration Manual.

Considering Educational Opportunity

Identifying cognitive potential is only part of the picture.

To better understand students' educational opportunities, the EGE project also collects contextual information related to Socioeconomic Status (SES). This information is not used to determine ability, but to help interpret results within the broader context of students' learning environments and opportunities.

Combining cognitive assessment with contextual information enables schools to make more informed decisions and contributes to fairer identification procedures.

From Identification to Support

Identification is not the final goal—it is the starting point.

Within the EGE project, identification is directly connected to appropriate educational support through:

- the Academic Language Programme (ALP), helping students develop the language needed for academic success;
- the Parent Participation Programme (PPP), strengthening collaboration between schools and families;
- teacher professional development focused on recognising and supporting gifted learners from diverse backgrounds.

Together, these components form an integrated approach that helps schools move from recognising hidden potential to nurturing it.

Learn More

The resources below provide practical guidance for implementing the EGE identification approach:

- COVAT-3 (EGE Module) Administration Manual
- SES Questionnaire
- Research Publications
- Practice Examples from Belgium, Ireland, Kosovo and the Netherlands

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