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# ECHA-Certificate

“Specialist in Pre-School Gifted Education”  
In-service training programme  
for kindergarten educators

University of Münster, Germany  
University of Nijmegen, The Netherlands  
International Center for Research on Ability  
(Internationales Centrum für Begabungsforschung, ICBF)

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The programme is organised by the International Centre for Research on Ability (ICBF), an institution based on a co-operation of the universities of Münster, Germany, and Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

The contents of the course programme have been approved by the European Council for High Ability (ECHA).

Prof. Franz J. Mönks, director of the Center for the Study of Giftedness in Nijmegen, a well-known university centre for high ability research, co-administrates the entire programme.

Project manager: **Hanna Vock**, pedagogue MA and instructor for pre-school educators.  
Assistance: **Barbara Teeke**, social pedagogue and pre-school educator

The programme will be evaluated by the ICBF.

Provided that all tasks of the programme are completely accomplished and the individual requirements are met, participants will obtain:

The ECHA Certificate, entitling them to use the following professional title of

“Specialist in Pre-School Gifted Education” / “Fachkraft für Hochbegabtenförderung im Vorschulbereich”.

The contents of the course partially correspond to the contents of the ECHA Diploma Course developed under the responsibility of Prof. Franz J. Mönks and Dr. Willy Peters, University of Nijmegen.

The specific application of contents and didactics with regard to the kindergarten\* working field was done by Hanna Vock. She is an instructor for kindergarten educators and is very knowledgeable and experienced in gifted education. Mrs. Vock has been a trainer for kindergarten personnel and has worked in and managed a

kindergarten herself for ten years.  
Additional lecturers will be invited for special subjects.

## Objectives:

At the end of the course, successful participants will have reached the following objectives:

1. They know different models of the support of high ability and of gifted children, as well as the frequently used terms and concepts. They know the most important directions of research. They have an individual concept of “high ability”, and they know the relevant indicators concerning the development of gifted children.
2. They are able to understand and evaluate different ways of identification of gifted children, as well as different ways of support; they are able to interpret test results correctly.
3. They know the value of early and holistic support for gifted children.
4. They know why the development of creativity is important for the development of the gifted child’s potential, and are able to implement methods to foster creativity.
5. They know the particular needs of gifted children regarding social interaction with peers. They understand the problems in social interaction between the highly gifted and other children. They know strategies for mediation. Thus, they can counteract tendencies of isolation.
6. They know about the particularities of personality development of gifted children, e. g. regarding their motivation to achieve as well as emotional and gender-specific aspects.
7. They have learned to understand the development of gifted children in a life-long perspective. They know

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\* kindergarten in Germany includes children age three to six

what contributes to a successful development of a potential of ability, so that the child's ability can later find its expression in accomplishment and success.

8. They are able to support gifted children in kindergarten by creating a playing and learning environment that is appropriate also to the needs of these children and by giving them adequate stimuli for development.
9. They can perceive children's abilities more precisely, appreciate different potentials of ability and thus avoid challenging too much or not enough. In this way, they can contribute decisively to preserving the pleasure of learning and discovering of the gifted children.
10. They are able to counsel parents and primary schools.

Participants with particular skills may take the role of tutors in follow-up sessions of the in-service training programme.

#### Contents

Instruction time during the course totals 500 hours. Theory and practical application are to be closely correlated.

Throughout the programme, the process of learning itself is reflected, and individual strengths can be detected. In addition to professional competence, personal capacities also constitute an important part of the training programme.

The in-service training programme lasts two years. During this period, 12 days are reserved for seminar units, which take place in form of 4 one-day-units and 4 two-day-units.

#### During the first year...

... the focus is more on the conveyance of necessary knowledge. Exercises are performed concerning the following subjects:

##### 1. Concepts of high ability

- ability - creativity - motivation
- motivation and the achievement motivation of gifted children in kindergartens
- the relationship of potential and achievement of gifted children
- theoretical concepts of high ability and human intelligence.

##### 2. Identification of pre-school high ability

- indicators for high ability of pre-school children
- identification of gifted children in kindergartens
- the testing of intelligence and ability
- cognitive, affective and social characteristics and needs

- of intellectually gifted pre-school children
- observations regarding the rate at which new learning strategies are being acquired
- problematic developments and behaviour engendered by lack of understanding on the part of the team member as well as by lack of challenge presented to the child

##### 3. Social environment

- the particularities of the social development of gifted children
- the gifted child and the kindergarten group
- the importance of peers
- gifted children and their family
- talking about the child's high ability with parents

##### 4. Ideas for support

- opportunities of support by affirmation, challenge and enrichment
- opportunities of support by acceleration
- modification of educational contents and processes and of playing materials
- reflections on possibilities of prevention of problematic developments
- creation of an adequate playing and learning environment in kindergarten, which encourages ability
- strategies for planning and development of appropriate projects
- the role of early reading in the development process of gifted children
- the decision process for recommendations concerning the most appropriate timing for school entry
- co-operation with primary schools and psychological services in school administration

The participants will receive selected literature in form of a reader. In preparation of each seminar session, sections of this reader have to be prepared.

Information on the subject and on the programme will also be given to the kindergarten teams of the participants.

#### The second year ...

... serves to apply the first year's contents in a more profound way under the guidance of the instructors. During this stage, seminar units are used to develop practical exercises, to advise and guide the participants during the implementation of these exercises in their own kindergartens, and finally to evaluate the results.

Examples of practical exercises:

- Planning, implementation and reflection of a project that takes into account the needs of gifted children

- the observation of the individual development of one gifted child in the group
- the observation of the communicational and co-operative behaviour of one gifted child in the group
- a concept of individual support for a gifted child
- a course programme for children in kindergarten that is adapted to the interests and the learning speed of the specially gifted
- an interview / consultation with the parents of a gifted child
- an interview / consultation with a primary school
- a team conference in kindergarten in order to support a gifted child

or

- the preparation of a draft concept for the support of gifted children in the participant's own kindergarten
- the collection and development of modules of enrichment in the kindergarten

The periods between the seminar units are used to elaborate and to implement the projects and concepts of this kind.

#### Pre-requisites for participants:

The in-service training programme is designed for professional educators who want to specialize in the support of gifted children.

Prospective participants must comply with one of the following requirements:

- state-approved educator with at least two years of working experience in a kindergarten (3-year-old children and older)
- equivalent qualification (individual evaluation by the programme manager)
- teacher in the instruction of educators

#### Evaluation of the project and evaluation of the participants' progress:

At the end of the in-service training programme, successful participants will receive the ECHA certificate.

The requirements for successful participation are:

- regular attendance and active participation during the seminar units
- the participation in an excursion to a kindergarten or a primary school specialised in the support of high ability
- the regular preparation of the required reading. With the help of the instructors, short essays will be prepared between the seminar units
- the guided development, implementation and documentation of at least two projects or concepts for the support of ability in kindergarten.

The participation in the seminar units and the various written results will serve to evaluate the participants' success.

#### For more information please contact:

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