

12.8.2024

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Title

Do honors students have more potential for excellence in their professional lives? / Karin Scager ...

Publication year

2012

Source/Footnote

In: Higher education. - 64 (2012) 1, S. 19 - 39

Inventory number

32409

Keywords

Ausland : Niederlande : einzelne Hochschulen ; Ausland : Niederlande : Studium, Studenten, Lehre ;
Begabung

Abstract

Universities in many countries increasingly value talent, and do so by developing special honors programs for their top students. The selection process for these programs often relies on the students' prior achievements in school. Research has shown, however, that school grades do not sufficiently predict academic success. According to Renzulli's (1986) three-ring model, student characteristics relating to intelligence, motivation and creativity are the most important predictors of excellent achievements in professional life. In this paper, we will investigate whether honors students differ from non-honors students in terms of these characteristics. By means of a questionnaire, more than 1,100 honors and non-honors students at Utrecht University were asked to assess themselves on six characteristics: intelligence, creative thinking, openness to experience, the desire to learn, persistence, and the drive to excel. The results showed that the honors students differed significantly from the non-honors students in terms of the combined variables as well as for the separate variables, with the exception of 'persistence'. The strongest distinguishing factors between honors and non-honors

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students appeared to be the desire to learn, the drive to excel and creativity, whilst there was little difference in terms of intelligence and persistence. However, the profiles of these differences varied according to the study program. While Law and Humanities honors students differed from their non-honors peers in terms of their drive to excel, Physics honors students were primarily more eager to learn than their non-honors peers, while the LA&S honors students scored higher on creative thinking than non-honors students. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Scager, Karin, E-Mail:

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