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# A Critical Evaluation of the Special Provisions for Gifted Students: a case study of a student in an Elementary School in Dubai

Neha H Sharma
Head of Inclusion, Latifa School for Girls, Dubai,

Author's email: hvsharma@eim.ae

## Abstract

This paper critically evaluates the special provisions made by an International Baccalaureate school in Dubai for a gifted male student in elementary grade. There is very limited research in the field of gifted education within the United Arab Emirates. No prior study about the programs and services offered to the gifted learners in the private schooling sector has been published till date. Although private schools following various curricula in the emirate of Dubai probably make special provisions to identify and cater to the unique needs of the gifted learners, there is no research-based study evaluating these services. Private schools are guided by UAE federal laws regarding inclusive education and are inspected annually by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority. These annual school inspection reports are available in the public domain which comprehensively evaluate the special educational provisions, but do not specifically focus on the gifted programs and services.

Lack of research studies and neglect by the local authorities regarding gifted provisions presented the opportunity, vision and rationale for the current qualitative case study. A holistic approach was deemed appropriate to describe and critically analyse the school policy, systems of identification, gifted programs offered and teacher readiness to provide appropriate support to identified gifted learners. This case study attempts to present a rich panorama of the gifted provisions offered in one private school in the UAE. Based on the literature regarding best practices in the field of gifted education, the provisions have been critically evaluated and some suggestions about possible improvements in services alongside few recommendations for future studies have been included in the current study.

## Introduction

*There are risks and costs to action. But they are far less than the long range risks of comfortable inaction* – J. F. Kennedy

The quote by Kennedy represents the dismal situation about the indifference regarding the gifted education research within the UAE. We have a singular study conducted on gifted provisions in the emirate of Dubai within the public sector by AlGhawi in 2017. Various barriers to gifted awareness reported by AlGhawi included the absence of a federal law specific to giftedness, lack of professional development for teachers, insufficient guidance given to parents and poor implementation of a policy document by the UAE Ministry of Education (2010). Globally, some of the other significant drawbacks cited were insufficient empirical evidence in terms of the efficacy of curriculum and differentiation for the gifted learners (Callahan et al., 2015). Additional impediments comprised of limited information regarding giftedness during the early years of children. Prior research on giftedness in the early formative years of a child indicated the frustration of their parents because of inconsistent support across different educational environments (Grubb, 2009). Also, the general failure in acknowledging the emotional needs of gifted male students were cited by educators. Previous research related to examining the social and emotional development of highly able male learners were few. Belief in self was recognized as the strongest affective factor in the achievement of success in line with their potential. Henceforth, increased number of studies focusing on the holistic development of gifted male students was highly recommended (Niehart et al., 2002).

At the centre of effective gifted education lie relevant curricula and appropriate instructional strategies, and despite the availability of good framework models, there seemed to be limited interventions offered to gifted students. The challenges with developing suitable learning outcomes, complexities in establishing definitive correlation between the curricula offered and learning goals achieved, and lack of reliable implementation constituted a few obstacles to its effective documentation (Callahan et al., 2015). During the last few years, there has been considerable emphasis on the issue of accountability by educational institutions regarding student learning progression. One of the priorities was to raise the learning standards for the gifted students, with the belief that successful approaches to enhancing the gifted achievement would automatically lend itself to improvement in the learning of the less able students. (VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh, 2006).

An attempt to support educators and school authorities was made by Rogers (2007), who developed a specific set of best practices for gifted learners from an amalgamation of various researches. The important indicators put forth were as follows:

- Accept the individuality of the gifted student and provide regular opportunities for independent self-directed tasks in their area of interest and passion
- Regular prospects of socializing with like minded peers should be provided within the school environment
- Instructional strategies could comprise of differentiated pace, specific organization of content, extent of review and practice in distinct curriculum areas

The present case study attempted to critically evaluate the provisions put in place for a gifted male student in elementary school in Dubai, utilising the above-mentioned indicators

to guide the research. The definitions used in this study followed by the research questions, literature review, details of the research approaches and critical analysis are explained in the subsequent sections.

**Definitions**

Following the important research on the gifted education and the UAE School Inspection framework, the key terns and their definitions guiding the present study are as follows:

***Giftedness*** refers to '*a student who is in possession of untrained and spontaneously-expressed exceptional natural ability in one or more domain of human ability*' (UAE Ministry of Education, 2015).

***Talented*** refers to *'a student who has been able to transform their 'giftedness' into exceptional performance'* (UAE Ministry of Education, 2015).

A case study approach using qualitative research methods was deemed appropriate for the purposes of the present study as an in-depth narrative would provide the required material for evaluating a program (Rogers, 2007). As explained by Fraenkel (2019), this qualitative study intended to holistically study how the specific needs of the learner were being catered to within the school environment. The study recorded data from various sources to purposefully evaluate each of the indicators with the respective literature review, current practices followed at the selected school and make some recommendations (Renzulli and Reis, 2014).

The research questions that guided the study were as follows:

RQ1) What were the school policies and systems to support a gifted learner?

RQ2) What systems of identification were used by the school?

RQ3) Was the student provided opportunities for independent self-directed learning in his area of interest?

RQ4) Did the individual teachers cater to the gifted learner by effective differentiation within the classroom?

As described by Van Tassel-Baska, the epistemological inclination of gifted program evaluation was to enhance the existing provisions based on the analysis of multiple sources of data to highlight the complex and prominent issues under consideration (CAG, 2008). The present study was based on this positive principle and the critical evaluation was carried out with the intention of investigating the efficacy of the gifted services, reporting good practices and suggesting some recommendations, wherever appropriate (CAG, 2008).

**Literature Review**

The background of inclusion services including gifted provisions within the UAE context is discussed and appraised with the relevant best practices in the field. The UAE Federal Law 29/2006 advocated for inclusive educational services across all the public and private schools. The UAE Ministry of Education (MoE) established the initial policy in 2010, as the *'School for all'* initiative that served as a common guidance framework for the schools, titled as "General rules for the provision of special education programmes and services". The MOE guidelines were comprehensive and subsumed services like identification procedures, support within the school environment, collaboration with parents, professional development for all teachers, enrichment opportunities, educational trips, development of Advanced Learning Plans (ALPs), monitoring their learning progressions, community-based projects, participations in competitions and leadership programs,

promoting technology skills, coordinating with multi-disciplinary teams including outside experts and vocational courses for gifted learners (UAE MOE, 2010).

In addition to the above policy, the second important framework pertaining to the giftedness was the UAE school inspection Framework 2015-16, which described the special needs categories including the talented and gifted group. Further to the services expected in the MoE 2010 policy, this framework added the collaboration of gifted students with their like-minded peers; and personalisation of their curriculum and correlating the pedagogical to the Cognitive Ability Testing- 4$^{th}$ edition (CAT4) scores. Both the above-mentioned frameworks were used to evaluate the school policy under consideration.

The UAE MoE framework (2010) explained the expected identification procedures broadly. Also, the UAE school inspection framework 2015-16 elucidated that all gifted students displayed the characteristics of inquiring, learning rapidly and using creative imagination. This framework explained that gifted identification could be adversely affected by the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, socioeconomic status, gender, curriculum not responsive to individual needs and student motivations. The recommended procedures for identifying gifted learners comprised of observations, screening checklists, parent liaisons, student interviews and self-interest surveys, standardized attainment scores and / or external cognitive assessments by psychologists (UAE MOE, 2015).

Looking beyond the UAE, prior research on gifted identification failed to come up with a perfect identification process. In the US, the Department of Education stated five criteria of creativity, intellectual ability, leadership skills, specific academic talent or artistic capabilities in conjunction with the IQ indication and achievement scores (Davis et al., 2011). Other studies recommended a multidimensional assessment criterion comprising of

spatial creativity, verbal intelligence, divergent thinking capabilities and fluid intelligence alongside formative tests, checklists, portfolios, surveys, standardized testing scores and school-based screening assessments (Nakano et al., 2016). Additionally, some researchers advocated other gifted assessments like Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children-4$^{th}$ and 5$^{th}$ editions, Kaufman Assessment Battery – 2$^{nd}$ edition, Stanford-Binet giftedness, namely Intelligence Scales – 5$^{th}$ edition and Gifted Rating Scales (Valler et al., 2017). Other prominent suggestions were to add creativity as a facet of giftedness by additional assessments like the Consensual Assessment Test, behavior rating scales like the NEO five-factor and Personality Inventory, or creativity style-measuring tool like the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory and student self-assessments (Kaufman et al., 2012). In conclusion, the process of identifying gifted learners is indeed a complex one.

Unlike the indefinite gifted identification procedures, inculcating the pattern of self-directed learning or independent research-based study has been considered as an important program model given to brilliant and dynamic gifted learners, with the teacher perception that students can investigate their interest areas, with sky being the limit. Typically, a scientific research would initiate with exploring a problem, and ideally comprise of developing or finding an appropriate solution based on collecting, recording and interpreting raw data and discussing the findings with an authentic audience (Davis, Rimm and Siegle, 2011). As reiterated by Westberg and Leppien (2018), one of the creative learning opportunities that can successfully cater to the needs of gifted learners is the aptly designed independent investigation under the able guidance of the teacher. When such strategies are methodically developed, they can lead to an intrinsically motivated student

gaining authentic learning opportunities and 21st century skills (Westberg and Leppien, 2018).

One of the important theoretical models for information research, namely the *Kuhlthau's Information Search Process Model*, was discussed by Mills et al. (2014). The Kuhlthau model examined the affective and cognitive aspects of this independent research and established a six-phase representative model known as *Information Search Process Model*, as shown below:

| ***Kuhlthau's Information Search Process Model*** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Stages** | Receive Assignment | Select topic | Explore for Focus | Form focus | Collect information | Prepare to present |
| **Feelings** | Uncertainty | Optimism | Confusion/ frustration/ doubt | clarity | sense of direction / confidence | Relief / sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction |
| **Thoughts** | | Ambiguity | → | → Increased interest | specificity → | |
| **Actions** | Seeking relevant information | → | → | Seeking pertinent information | | |

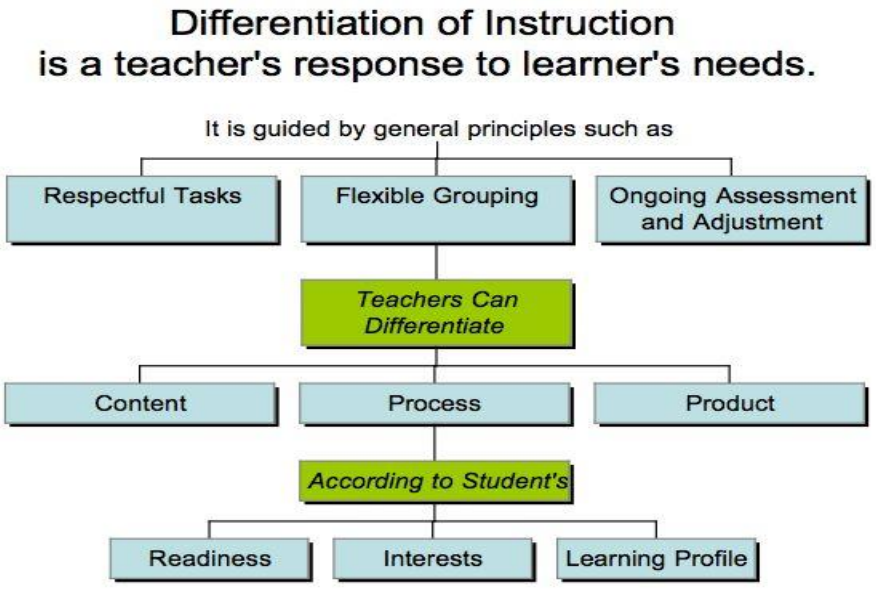
Kuhlthau's model explained the emotions, perceptions and actions experienced by learners commonly throughout the research process. Mills et al. (2014) suggested ways to use this

model with technology integration to make meaningful educational experiences for learners and encourage creativity.

Further to the independent learning, one of the other common strategies that should be utilised by the classroom teacher is effective differentiation. Prior researches have reported that half of the curriculum content taught in traditional classrooms and skills sets were repetitive and boring for the gifted learners. The NAGC provided the guiding principles regarding the curriculum modifications and instructional strategies, which were advocated by numerous scholars over the past years (Callahan et al., 2015). Some of the significant contributions in terms of the curriculum and instructional models suited to gifted education were discussed in detail below:

*Differentiated Instruction Model*

Tomilson's Differentiation Model



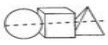
This model by (Tomilson, 2001) was based on adapting the three important elements of the classroom curriculum, namely, content process and the product. This model can be represented as follows:

*Depth and Complexity Model*

Kaplan (2005) designed a model using structure-based approach to adapting curriculum with a combination of content depth and complexity in a specific discipline. This model was grounded in standards-based curriculum to advance academic rigour and understanding by focusing the attention of the student and the teacher on divergent, challenging and abstract aspects of disciple specific knowledge. The tabular representation of the model was included here for reference.

Kaplan's Depth and Complexity Model

**Depth & Complexity Icon Chart**

| *Depth* | *Icon* | *Definition* | *Example* |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Language of the Discipline** |  | What vocabulary terms are specific to the content or discipline? | Tools Jargon Icons Acronyms Special phrases Terms Slang Abbreviations |
| **Details** |  | What are the defining features or characteristics? Find examples and evidence to support opinions and ideas. | Parts Factors Attributes Variables Distinguishing Traits |
| **Patterns** |  | What elements reoccur? What is the sequence or order of events? Make predictions based on past events. | Predictability Repetition |
| **Unanswered Questions** | ??? | What information is unclear, missing, or unavailable? What evidence do you need? What has not yet been proven? | Missing Parts Incomplete Ideas Discrepancies Unresolved issues Ambiguity |
| **Rules** |  | What structure underlies this subject? What guidelines or regulations affect it? What hierarchy or ordering principle is at work? | Structure Order Reasons Organization Explanation Classification "Because..." |
| **Trends** |  | Note factors (Social Economic, Political, Geographic) that cause events to occur. Identify patterns of change over time | Influence Forces Direction Course of Action Compare, Contrast and Forecast |
| **Ethics** |  | What moral principles are involved in this subject? What controversies exist? What arguments could emerge from a study of this topic? | Values Morals Pro and Con Bias Discrimination Prejudice Judging Differing Opinions Point of View Right and Wrong Wisdom |
| **Big Ideas** |  | What theory or general statement applies to these ideas? How do these ideas relate to broad concepts such as change, systems, chaos vs. order, etc? What is the main idea? | Draw conclusions based on evidence Make generalizations Summarize Theory Principle Main Idea |
| **Across the Disciplines** |  | Relate the area of study to other subjects within, between, and across disciplines. | Connect Associate Integrate Lind Ideas Cross-Curricular study |
| **Changes over Time** |  | How are elements related in terms of the past, present, and future? How and why do things change? What doesn't change? | Connecting points in time Examining a time period Compare and Contrast |
| **Different Perspectives** |  | How would others see the situation differently? | Different roles and knowledge Opposing viewpoints |

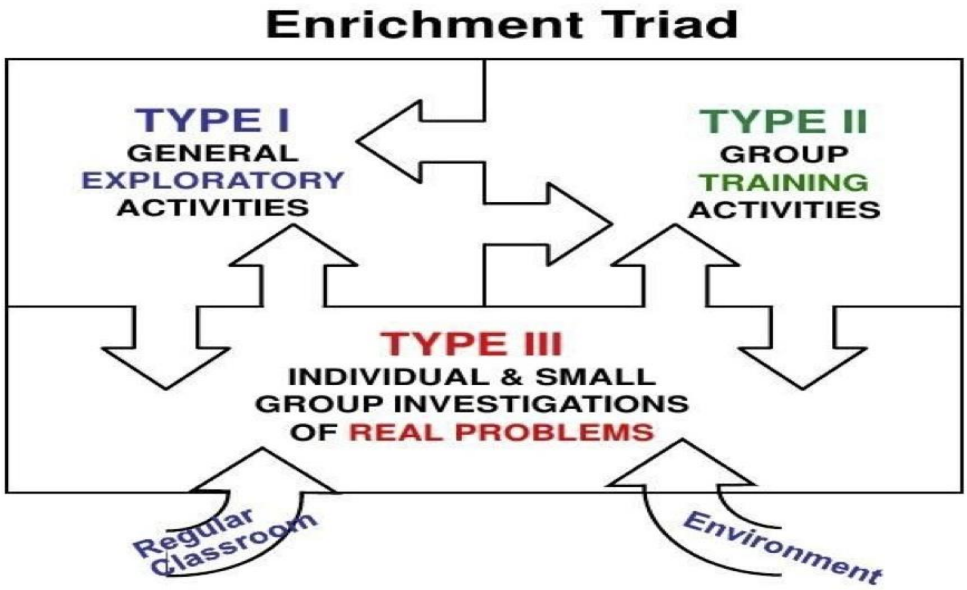
Based upon the work of Sandra Kaplan

Both the Tomilson's Differentiation model and the Kaplan's Depth and Complexity model were used to evaluate the provisions by the current school.

One of the last aspects of gifted provisions that were analysed was the opportunities offered to the student for socialising with his like-minded peers in the current study. Renzulli and Reis (2014) popularized the enrichment methods of engaging gifted learners by including extending the content of traditions into the context of real world, application of problem-solving skills and encouraging an in-depth exploration within the area of their interest to create products that appeal to credible audiences. Grounded in this enrichment theory, Renzulli and Reis proposed that the activities should be learner-centred and comprise of open-ended problems that stimulate the gifted students to learn and creates opportunities

for a range of assessments. Primary-Interest-A-Lyzer forms were recommended to understand student interests and inform all teachers working with the gifted learner. For the purposes of this section of the study, the focus ranged from Type II to Type III activities of the School wide enrichment (SEM) model shown below:

Renzulli's Schoolwide Enrichment Model




Recent research studied the significance of segregated learning that involved being grouped with like-minded peers for gifted learners. Ability grouping opportunities within the school based on the task, interests, motivations, ability, learning styles and required instructional strategies reported many advantages for the gifted students. Such groupings allowed gifted learners and other high ability students to work in mutually enriching and benefitting circumstances, and students alongside teachers reported their satisfaction with the educational programs. Another study specifically focusing on elementary gifted learners, recorded an enhanced sense of challenge and academic gratification amongst the students and positive perceptions amongst their parents. Many researchers noted that ability-based

grouping resulted in lower self-esteem in gifted students due to the social relation dynamics within the group. A similar study in Israel found positive perceptions in gifted students about school, better interactions between teachers and students and higher academic levels (Vidergor and Gordon, 2015).

The research methodology used in the current study, discussion of the findings and recommendations are discussed in the next sections.

**Research Methodology**

A case study approach was deemed appropriate for the current study as the intention was to learn comprehensively all the gifted provisions made available to an elementary male gifted student. In order to gain an insight into the current services being offered in one of the private schools with a gifted program in place, the in-depth understanding of the provisions being made required a thorough study (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Stake explained similar research as an intrinsic case study, where the researcher aims to understand a specific individual to throw some light on what is going on (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

*Sampling, Site Selection and Case Background*

Purposive sampling was used to select an IB curriculum school with a well-established gifted program for students, based on the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA, 2018) reports published in the public domain. This school had a policy and program to serve the gifted and talents learners from the past three years. The researcher works at the same school and hence access arrangements was easy to manage. The selected classroom was in the primary section and the student called VD for the purposes of this research, was studying in Grade-2. He was identified and placed on the gifted register from the last three years. The participants for this study included the student, his parents,

classroom teacher, enrichment activity teacher and the head of inclusion who was also the G&T coordinator of the school. The procedures of VD's identification and support services put forth by the school were studied in detail utilizing the following procedures.

*Interviews and Observations*

Multiple interviews formed a part of the current study. One of the principle values of a case study was to collect the description and interpretation of the relevant parties. As explained by Fraenkel (2019), interviews were a significant route to multiple realities. Observations were used as the primary tool to understand the VD's case with pertinent issues in mind of the observer. The opportune classes were selected to help a greater perception of the support services for our gifted student. Qualitative data assume the connotations as directly identified by the researcher (Fraenkel, 2019).

*Triangulation of Data*

Data was recorded by multiple sources including observations, interviews and documentation study. Additionally, the interviews were conducted with multiple stakeholders like the student, parents and relevant teachers. All the above ensured triangulation of data. Also, all the data collected and interpreted in any qualitative research is dependent on the researcher, internal validity is not as important. The researcher realized the significance of presenting multiple perspectives as part of the study (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

*Ethical Considerations*

The purpose of the study was discussed with all the relevant authorities. A letter to this effect was received by the university and shared with the participants and their informed consent obtained (Creswell, 2007). Special care was taken to not reveal the participants'

identity and respecting the confidentiality aspect of the study to ensure that the participants faced no harm or embarrassment. Also, participants were always treated with respect during the study. Additionally, the researcher ensured that no psychological or physical damage was faced by any participant at any time (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

## Research findings

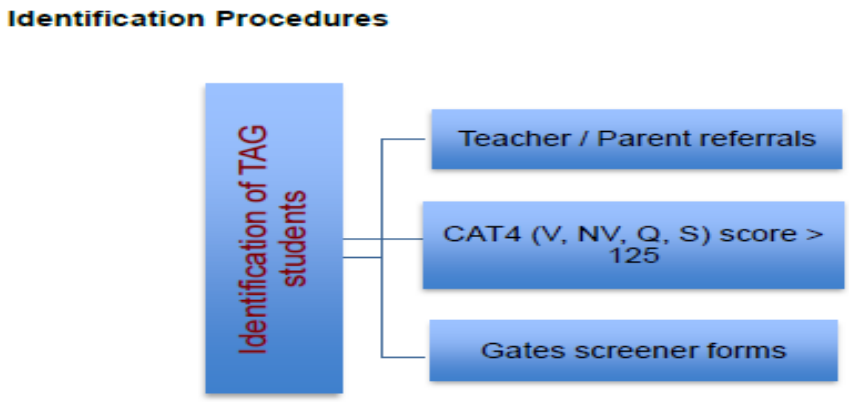
### *The School's Policies and Systems to Support a Gifted Learner*

The school policy being analyzed was comprehensive and the following elements were appropriately postulated for the G&T students. The Admissions policy and its adherence to the federal laws of inclusion were clear, implying that the school had an inclusive ethos. The definitions of gifted and talented were adopted from the MOE (2010) policy framework. The provisions offered to the G&T students comprised of extensive identification procedures, indications of possible strengths of G&T students, learner profiles called student passports, differentiation strategies that could be followed by classroom teachers, enrichment opportunities outside of classrooms in the form of after school or co-curricular activities, participation in external competitions like *The Quest*, *KENKEN* competitions, subject-specific Olympiads, debates, educational visits and collaboration with parents. The policy document was found to be a strong document in terms of scope of G&T services. The identification procedures, differentiation strategies used by teachers, enrichment activities, independent problem-solving opportunities and collaboration with parents were analyzed in the specific section of this portfolio. The school policy and VD's participation certificates at various competitions were handed to the researcher for a preview.

***System for identifying gifted and talented students in the case***

The identification procedures at the present school was multi-tiered and this was explained in the school policy, as follows:

The School's identification process:




The head of inclusion explained that the school called its Talented and Gifted students as TAG learners. All the new applicants to the school admission from Grade-2 upwards, had to appear for the CAT4 tests. The four batteries covered by these assessments were the verbal (V) skills, non-verbal (NV) skills or general problem-solving skills, quantitative (Q) or number abilities and spatial (S) awareness indicator. The average scores for any student would ideally be expected as 100 and the range of 100-125 was above average skills. However, the scores of 125 or above in the NV area with similar scores in any other battery would be considered as a strong indication for giftedness. This testing at admissions, parent and student interviews, previous school reports helped gifted identification at the time of admission itself. For younger students, the school would follow up with parent interviews, previous school reports and observations after the child joins the school.

The head of inclusion would analyze the CAT4 scores of all the students in the beginning of the year. The CAT4 scores were considered only indicative and the analyzed data would be sent to individual classroom teachers for their comments. Similarly, any teacher or parent could refer a student for gifted identification by filling a referral form. The head of inclusion would make a list of all referrals and see this in combination with the standardized testing scores, achievement data, observations, parent interviews and teacher feedback. Based on the findings, she would ask the teacher to fill the Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scales (GATES) screener forms. This screener form evaluated the general intelligence, academic capability, subject specific ability, leadership skills and artistic talents. After the data from various sources was collected, the head of inclusion would develop the TAG register for the school. These procedures agreed with the research by Davis et al. (2011), Nakano et al. (2016), Valler et al. (2017) and the UAE MOE (2015). VD was referred to the head of inclusion by his parents and his homeroom teacher, when he was studying in KG2. His questioning skills, reading and comprehension skills that were more than 2 standards above, his scientific knowledge, excellent verbal abilities, videos of his work and the GATES screener were a clear indication of his being gifted.

After the students were identified as gifted and talented, individual student passports were developed by the head if inclusion. This student passport collated information like the demographic data, their picture, school identity number, strengths and weaknesses, areas of interest, learning styles, CAT4 and achievement data including Progress tests in English, Math and Science; instructional strategies comprising of the classroom environment, teaching instructions, organizational strategies and socioemotional instructions; learning goals, subjects that the student needs to be challenged, enrichment opportunity, any special

information about interests pursued outside of school, parental feedback, document review date and responsibility, and most importantly student voice. VD's student passport was studied in detail. Also, parents were addressed during the information session and gifted provisions were discussed. Any parental feedback would be taken on board, if possible. This helped to get parental support and understanding of school procedures. The student passports were then distributed to all teachers and their parents.

***Availability of opportunities for independents self-directed learning for gifted students***

Based on the interview data gathered, VD was offered multiple opportunities for independent research by good collaboration between his teachers, head of inclusion and his parents. For the purposes of an evaluation, one independent project by VD on *Non-pollution cars* in the academic year 2015-16 was considered in this section.

Using the affective and cognitive stages of the *Kuhlthau's Information Search Process Model,* VD's project was analysed in detail as follows herewith:

Forming a focus: VD was studying in Kindergarten 2, when he came up with an interesting problem that he wanted to investigate further. His optimistic statements to initiate his research were "*I want to solve the problem of pollution by cars", "I want to make a car that will absorb carbon dioxide and give out oxygen" and "It will also use energy from solar panels".* VD's strong subject areas were Science and Mathematics. While he was slightly confused with the process of a scientific exploration and free access to the internet could not be allowed due to his tender age, his parents and head of inclusion of the school collaboratively guided him with finding appropriate websites and other resources. VD began with the process of information collection with the above-mentioned focus.

Collecting information: With a clear focus, VD began collecting data regarding methods of using solar power. He researched information about the possible car design that could absorb carbon-dioxide and methane from atmosphere to reduce greenhouse gases and give out oxygen. Some of the concerns got added as he began collecting information like reducing methane gas. VD would voluntarily discuss the issues he faced in collecting information with his parents and head of inclusion. He used number of resources like websites, books, videos and advice from adults.

Preparing to present: This stage of the independent project was not easy for VD due to multiple reasons. Although he had very strong verbal abilities and did not lack confidence, VD was unfamiliar with PowerPoint and this was his first opportunity to present to a class of peers. With appropriate scaffolding of his parents and the head of inclusion, he learnt to use the PowerPoint and made a draft version. The head of inclusion showed him how and why to add pictures and images to the presentation to make it simple to understand for his peers. As explained by Kuhlthau, at this stage VD had a sense of satisfaction, which was apparent as he was focused throughout the process. He went on to present his innovative concept not only in his class, but also in the assembly for the early years. As discussed by the head of inclusion, this experience seemed to set the tone for VD as he never stopped after his pilot independent research. Over the past 3 years, VD has worked on multiple self-directed projects, won the annual elementary science fairs for 2 consecutive years alongside winning the 'Innovators Competition by FabLab' in December 2017 in Dubai.

***Appropriateness of support from individual teachers to the gifted and talented***

In the current school, students had a homeroom teacher who was responsible the core subjects of English, Math and Science. In the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP)

curriculum, Science was not an explicit subject, but as part of the Unit of Inquiry. There were specialist teachers for other subjects like Arabic, art, music and physical education. VD's student passport was shared with all the subject teachers and one of his favourite subjects was Science. His Science classroom and snack time were observed alongside interviewing his homeroom teacher as part of this study. The snack time was selected to observe his social acceptance and interactions with his peers at school.

*Interview with the homeroom teacher*

Student VD's homeroom teacher (HRT) was aware of his individual needs, had met with the head of inclusion and VD's parents on multiple occasions to discuss the way forward within the classroom. HRT discussed that VD was also supported by after school enrichment club that focused on gifted learners. There were occasions when VD was not keen to be a part of the classroom projects and HRT offered him alternate projects. As an example, HRT specifically described an independent self-directed project based on the game of Cricket, which was the student's area of interest. This was in line with Tomilson's Differentiated Instruction Model's recommendation of process and product differentiation based on student's interest and readiness. HRT said that this seemed to motivate VD and his parents and head of inclusion expressed their happiness for HRT's effort. Also, the teacher explained that he would try to provide challenges within the classroom by planning extension activities for each subject for VD and discussed that incorporating a range of developmental tasks was important. He specifically mentioned that he did not simply add repetitive tasks and ensured that VD would not get bored. HRT's instructional strategies were in line with the Kaplan's Depth and Complexity model, which suggested promoting academic rigour and student understanding that catered to individual needs in an

appropriate manner. Additionally, HRT expressed satisfaction with the support given by the head of inclusion to VD. Some examples included participation opportunities for VD in couple of external competitions and a chance to present his work in the Grade-2 assembly. He also mentioned that the Art teacher was involved with an individual project with VD.

***Observations***

The student observation during the Science class was arranged by the coordination between the head of inclusion and HRT. The lesson was an hour long and the objective was understanding the properties of light under the theme of 'How the world works" in the PYP. Whilst most of the students were learning that light is made up of several colours and were in the process of using the prism to see the light properties; VD was conducting a different experiment. HRT seemed to go over to VD on a few occasions and provide some scaffolding. The head of inclusion came into the class after 20 mins. After 30 minutes, VD was asked to describe his experiment to the class. He explained about laws of light reflection by drawing on the whiteboard, discussed how angle of incidence was equal to angle of reflection and answered a few questions put forth by his peers. Later, he showed his experiment in smaller groups to his class peers. The head of inclusion met with VD for a few minutes, congratulated him for his effort and gave him the next task of carrying out a similar project on light refraction. VD seemed very happy to meet the her and she met with HRT briefly before leaving the class.

During snack time, VD was observed to happily chat with his friends whilst eating his snack from home. He seemed to be a part of the group as much as any other child, and

there was no obvious difference in any social interactions. VD was a very energetic child and seemed to enjoy school for the observed time.

Where there any opportunities for the gifted student to interact with other students with the same abilities? The current school offered enrichment club as an after-school activity to provide opportunities to the gifted learners to work with like minded peers. In the elementary section of the school, the enrichment club was run in two groups, from Kindergarten to Grade-2 and from Grade-3 to Grade-5. The student enrolment for this enrichment opportunity was by invitation only for identified gifted learners. This provided the appropriate environment to make instructional strategies of providing very challenging materials to students. Such services were in line with the study conducted by Vidergor and Gordon (2015).

The resources for the enrichment activities were initially developed by the head of inclusion. However, the individual teachers were trained and as they got to know the students over time, they developed their own resources from the past three months. The teachers do get the approval regarding the resources from the head of inclusion. Some of the problem-solving scenarios were borrowed from relevant books like the *BrainQuest series*. In a quest to improve their services, the head of inclusion piloted the Primary interest-a lyzer forms, as recommended by Renzulli and Reis (2014), to be filled by all the students. He recorded that he enjoyed reading Science books, liked the enrichment, chess and cricket clubs, he was interested in learning about human behavior, recent interest in quantum physics, favourite television channels included national geographic and music, would love to go to museum, science center, planetarium and trekking, write about a plane design, enjoyed Indian classical music, played piano, build Lego and play games.

The enrichment teacher (ET) collected the primary interest-a-lyzer forms, analysed collaboratively with the ET, and determined two prominent themes of coding and science. The subsequent classes were mostly based on these two themes.

**Recommendations**

A few of the areas of the policy that could be improved were the professional development of teachers and parents. Also, there was no mention of the detailed Advanced Learning Plan in the school support services (UAE MOE, 2010). These aspects were totally missing from the school policy. The identification and the instructional strategies could be improved, and these were discussed in the relevant sections of this portfolio. Additionally, the monitoring of progress of the G&T learners was poorly developed within the school policy. Since the school had strong identification procedures in place for gifted students, the only recommendation would be to include student referrals as part of the identification procedures. Also, there needed to be some form of behavior rating scales and creativity checklists to make the identification process more comprehensive.

The school seemed to put the effective instructional strategies and systems of support with respect to the independent research process for VD. There was appropriate collaboration between all the stakeholders in this process. Some of the recommendations would be enhancing the independent research process by using learning logs with VD's reflections along his journey (Stripling, 1994). The school can try to implement the model by Renzulli and Reis and use the SPAF form to assess the product created by the gifted learner. Based on the researcher's observations, the teachers seemed to be aware of VD's needs and there was regular and good collaboration between all the stakeholders. The practices followed at

the school seemed to be in line with the suggested models in the literature review of this section. Some of the recommendations would be an increased attention from the head of inclusion and more opportunities for teacher's professional development throughout the year.

Lastly, the school seemed to be working in the appropriate direction regarding the gifted provisions. Good collaboration was in place between the enrichment teacher, head of inclusion and the parents. A strong recommendation would be to implement the SEM by Renzulli and Reis (2014) to make the enrichment opportunities available to a wider student population, instead of only the narrow population of the identified gifted learners.

**Limitations of the study**

Since the present study was conducted in the school where the researcher works in a leadership position, access was easily arranged. She was aware of this limitation and followed the 'backyard study' protocol expected. The present case-study was focused on one child and the generalizability of the findings was not possible nor the intent. Since the time was limited for this case-study, the researcher could not evaluate some of the important aspects of support provisions like parental involvement, students' motivations and other emotional needs.

**Conclusion**

Previous research findings indicated the positive influence of teachers challenging the students in their areas of interest to advance their learning. Teachers reported more confidence in personalising curriculum when ability-based grouping option was available (Vidergor and Gordon, 2015). Both findings agreed with those reported by the teachers at

the school considered for this case study. The homeroom teacher seemed confident in challenging VD and the enrichment teacher grew increasingly comfortable in developing resources for VD. Also, the current school had many strong practices for gifted learners and this finding complied with the positive evolution in gifted education recorded by AlGhawi (2017) during her research across public schools in Dubai.

Some of the future recommendations would include regular professional development for teachers, developing advanced learning plans for gifted students, improved monitoring of student achievement and regular parent meetings (AlGhawi, 2017). As disclosed by the US Department of Education, general failure of regular school curriculum to challenge the bright minds led to students being bored, lacking motivations and increased underachievement (Vidergor and Gordon, 2015). The UAE MOE and KHDA need to develop school inspection indicators focusing on gifted education, ask schools to send their list of G&T learners and focus on the development of a G&T policy to ensure that our intelligent minds perform to their potential and help the UAE to meet its national agenda parameters of the PISA and TIMSS targets.

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| Item No. | Reviewer Requirement/Feedback | Degree of Response | Page Number(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Focus:**<br>Paper has some focus and potential to contribute to the relevant research. However, paper needs a clear, achievable and measurable aim, e.g. "…to critically evaluate the provisions for a gifted male student in elementary school in Dubai in order to determine….. | Completed | 1, 2, 3 |
| 2 | **Relationship to Literature/Existing Knowledge:**<br>- Need to provide reference for the referred KHDA report mentioned on page 6 under the section titled 'Sampling, Site Selection and Case Background' | Completed | 26 |
| 3 | **Relationship to Literature/Existing Knowledge:**<br>- The literature review should draw on up-to-date perspectives relating to the main concept in the paper – 'Giftedness'; should also reference the quotes on 'Giftedness' on page 9, under section titled 'Definitions of Gifted and Talented'. See references section. | Completed. Westberg and Leppien (2018).<br>Mills L., Knezek G. and Khaddage F. (2014) | 8<br>9 |
| 4 | **Relationship to Literature/Existing Knowledge:**<br>- Paper needs a coherent approach to the literature review – identifying and reviewing all relevant literature under one section, possibly named 'literature review' | Completed. One Literature Review Section. | 6 |
| 5 | **Methodology and Results:**<br>Paper uses a more pragmatic approach in the research process which is appropriate to a practitioner research such as this. However, the paper needs to develop a methodology section to clearly explain the research design and the process used to generate and make sense of the data. | Completed<br>Fraenkel et al., 2019 | 13 |

| Item No. | Reviewer Requirement/Feedback | Degree of Response | Page Number(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | **Methodology and Results:**<br>The results/findings of the research/paper should be based on the data collected from the interviews, observation and documents. The results should be brought under one section, showing how data is used to answer each question.<br>All recommendations should be contained under one section. | Completed | 15 |
| 7 | ***Implications for Research, Practice and/or Society:***<br>Paper provides recommendation to inform policy and practice. All recommendations should be discussed under a single section titled 'Recommendation' | Completed | 23 |
| 8 | **Quality of Communication:**<br>- Paper needs a coherent structure; the current structure provides limited understanding to its core arguments and contribution. Paper should be structured (sections) as follows: introduction; literature review; methodology; research findings; recommendation/conclusion.<br>- The findings should show/draw evidence from the data collected<br>- Referencing: Ensure that all works referenced in the article are listed in the list of references. Avoid using web addresses as reference in the body of paper; should come in the reference list<br>- Proof read the paper to deal with all typos, omissions<br>- Use the journal template and guideline for the revised submission | Completed | 3-27 |

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|---|---|---|
| Accept | | Suitable for inclusion |
| **Accept subject to amendments** | **X** | **Suitable but needs more work, does not need to be fully reviewed again** |
| Reconsider after rewrite | | Suitable but needs more work, and for further review |
| Reject | | Not suitable for inclusion |