

COUNSELING GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS IN JORDANIAN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

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The primary purpose of this study was to review counseling services for students who are gifted and talented at Jordanian inclusive schools in relation to theoretical counseling literature. The present study is considered a theoretical study. Gifted and talented students exhibit a wide range of characteristics, among of which are intellectual abilities and high achievement. The review indicated that counseling this group of students at Jordanian inclusive schools still faces a variety challenges. Foremost were lack of qualified teachers, few of gifted educational programs, and lack of skilled counselors. The study ended by offering a number of conclusions and implications. Basically, there is a need to establish a specialized counseling program for this group of students in the areas of psychological, academic, and career counseling.

Giftedness and talent are considered a potential for high academic achievement. Students with giftedness and talents do not have visible obstacles that challenge their abilities to learn and participate at schools and in society; however, they can be handicapped by the educational system and attitudes of the society. The unique intellectual abilities of this population enable them to obtain high performance and accomplishments (Smith, 2007). Most of those students get their education in regular or inclusive schools, and because of their advanced cognitive capabilities, they face barriers to accomplish their full potential. In regular classroom, these students are usually characterized by responding quickly and appropriately to questions than their classmates, they tend to select accurate performance that exhibit their unique abilities, and clearly define the final goal and outcome of their activities (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2007).

In inclusive schools, the challenges are rising when the teachers should teach all students at the level of average students, students with giftedness and talents will be neglected because the curricula are designed for regular students. For example, some of these students may display their creativity in science, writing, or other areas of personal interest, and because of regular curricula are designed to meet the needs of average classmates, these groups of students may face barriers in their development (Kirk, Gallagher, & Anastasiow, 2003; Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2007). In spite of these and because of unusual rapid development some of them face challenges to enhance their giftedness. Because they usually get their schooling at regular or inclusive schools, they fail to thrive without modifications. It is clear that students who are gifted and talented are significantly different from the norm, so they are considered as exceptional learners. Therefore, they need special provision and counseling services in order to respond to their unique needs (Silverman, 1993).

Teacher of students who are gifted and talented face difficulties to facilitate each student's development because of lack availability of appropriate educational programs. On the other hand, parents need to know how to guide their gifted and talented child especially to hold realistic expectations for his or her self and making suitable decisions about future career choices (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pollen, 2012; Smith, 2007; Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2007). Therefore, defining giftedness is very important in order to identify who will educate gifted and talented students and specify the quality of educational services that must be offered to them. Nowadays, many definitions commonly used to identify gifted and talented, foremost is introduced by Renzulli (2003) who describes giftedness as consists of interaction of above average general intellectual abilities, high level of task commitment, and creativity. On the other

hand, a federal definition reported by Marland (1972) indicates that gifted and talented children exhibit general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, ability in the visual or performing arts, and psychomotor ability (Heward, 2006). A conclusion emerged from these definitions are that gifted and talented students considered as special needs and requires special services in order to respond to their giftedness and talent.

Students who are gifted and talented display a wide range of intellectual abilities, behavior patterns and personality types. Among of these characteristics: intellectual abilities, higher academic achievement, emotional stability, moral character, positive self-concept and self-sufficient, sensitive to their own feeling, others feel depressed and isolated and have behavioral problems. The nature of giftedness affects the individual's social and emotional adjustment and educational and psychological needs (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2012). Some experts view gifted students as are more at risk for adjustment problems, and others suggest that gifted students are better adjusted than their non-gifted peers (Kirk, Gallagher, & Anastasiow, 2003). Because emotional development is important as academic achievement, counseling plays a crucial role to help them obtain optimal healthy emotional development.

Nowadays, there are many commonly educational options used to address the unique needs of students who are gifted and talented like inclusive practices and co-teaching that can enhance their intellectual capabilities and ensure equal access to appropriate education. Like all students, those who struggle to learn because of their intellectual ability are to be taught by using research based practices and they are expected to reach the same standards as all students. Therefore, teachers, administrators, parents, and other professional are primary responsible for meeting the special needs of students who are gifted and talented (Friend & Bursuck, 2009).

On the other hand, Frederickson and Cline (2009) maintain that inclusive education describes the process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by responding and reconstructing its curricular organization and provision and allocating resources to enhance equality of opportunity. Through this process the school builds its capacity to accept all pupils from the local community who wish to attend, in so doing, reduces the need to exclude pupils (p.71).

Inclusionary practices view labeling students with special needs as harmful and ineffective (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2012). Therefore, establishing effective inclusive schools require sensitive and acceptable educational context to the needs of all students including those with special needs. Also, the personnel staff should take into their account the different factors that shape and contribute to students unique needs. Thus, teachers, students, and family members must be aware of inclusionary practices. In addition, obtaining inclusive schools require encourage acceptance, awareness, sensitiveness, collaboration, and response to the unique needs of the students (Salend, 2005).

Educating students who are gifted and talented at inclusive schools may face variety of challenges such as the curriculum is not modified, the slow of instructional pace, repetition of mastered facts and information, lack of opportunities available to study personal interest topics, and lack of focusing on thinking skills (Smith, 2007). On the other hand, Kim (2006) states that addressing the needs of pupils are a strategic goal for every educational system; therefore, the teachers of gifted and talented students must be sensitive to the unique characteristics and needs of this population. Schroth and Helfer (2009) conclude that administrators, gifted education teachers, general education teachers need support especially in areas of making available resources, refining of programs, and using effective planning.

Educating gifted and talented students in Jordan

Jordan is a developing country suffering from limited resources. Therefore, Jordan depends more on the development of the human resources than economic resources. Like other countries in development, our social and educational systems face a variety of barriers that challenge equal access to education for all students. Despite these limitations and restrictions, the Jordanian Ministry of Education has been paid special attention to gifted education and established Alreyadi Centers for Caring Gifted and Talented Students in each Governorate and resource rooms supervised by special education teachers. These teachers were prepared and trained to meet the special needs of disabled learners in general. Furthermore, their special education teacher programs offered at Jordanian Universities have lack of courses and training in education of giftedness, however, these programs are not designed for counseling students who are gifted and talented or included special courses in counseling this group of students. Thus, those teachers are not able to teach or meet educational needs of this population. On the other hand, the regular teachers lack the skills needed to teach this group of students and challenge their

advanced cognitive abilities. Indeed, these teachers prepared and trained to teach regular students not students who are gifted and talented. In addition, Jordanian curriculum prepared to meet the needs of normal developmental milestones of normal students. The regular teachers are not prepared to make the changes and modifications needed in the curricula to address the unique needs of this group of students. Thus, our Jordanian inclusive schools are not able to foster the advanced cognitive abilities of gifted and talented students.

The goal and the methodology of the study

The primary purpose of this study was to review the process of counseling students who are gifted and talented at Jordanian inclusive schools in relation to theoretical counseling literature. Therefore this study is considered as a theoretical study. To achieve the goal of the study, the investigator reviewed the theoretical literature of counseling gifted and talented students as well as the reality of counseling this group of students in Jordanian inclusive schools. The investigator reviewed the data bases available in the universities of Jordan, published articles and proceedings of conferences focuses on gifted counseling, documents available at The Ministry of Education in Jordan, and the content of counseling preparation programs offered at the local state and private universities. Throughout this review, the investigator try to answer the following questions: What are the counseling services offered for students who are gifted and talented at Jordanian inclusive schools? What is the type of counseling does the students who are gifted and talented need at Jordanian inclusive schools? Answering these questions will be obtained by reviewing the theoretical counseling literature and the comments made about the reality of counseling this group of students in Jordanian inclusive schools.

Theoretical review of counseling students who are gifted and talented and comments

The unusual rapid of cognitive development of students who are gifted and talented influences the other developmental milestones such as psychomotor, language and speech, imaginational, intellectual, emotional, moral, social, and emotional aspects. Some of those students may display their unusual developmental in extra physical energy, which may be shown in rapid speech and gestures, and highly active especially in executing their daily life activities and personal projects (Dulit, 1992; Friend & Bursuck, 2009; Silverman, 1993). Also, Hong, Perkins, and Milgram (1993) stresses that gifted students' prefer to work with peers and learning by carrying out personal activities and doing experiential projects. In addition, Hull-Blanks, Kerr, and Kurpius (2004) indicates that some talented students' display impulsivity, aggression, and lower self-esteem. These characteristics may explain and prove why special provisions and counseling students who are gifted and talented are needed to help them in managing their unique needs. Jordan as a developing country needs well skilled and qualified teachers and counselors to meet the unique needs of students who are gifted and talented. Despite the limited resources of Jordan, The Ministry of Education started including special needs students at public and private schools.

Very little literature has been written about counseling students with special gifts in Jordan and this may reflect the importance and necessity of targeting counseling this group of students. A review of the published articles and proceedings of conferences focuses on gifted and talented counseling; only one study found and carried out by Dababnah (1998). The study was aimed to develop an assessment tool for identifying problems and needs of students who are gifted. The results of the study revealed that problems and needs of this group of students were more than of those of normal students. School counselors who work at Jordanian inclusive schools were prepared and trained to deal with the counseling needs of regular students.

According to Gladding (2009) counseling aims to understand psychological life of the person through applying mental health and human development principles. Therefore, a counselor is a professional person who listens to people and helps them solve their adjustment difficulties through using specific procedures. In case of counseling gifted and talented students, the counselor must be skilled, trained, and have the potential to understand inner life and differentiated counseling needs of this group of students. Stephen, Jain, and Kim (2010) maintains that counseling techniques are effective in meeting a variety of social problems that can exhibited by special needs students within the school context. Robbins, Tonemah, and Robbins, (2002) emphasizes the importance of participation in the social activities and interaction with parents for students who are gifted and talented. Landrum (1987) stresses the authority role of multidimensional and collaborative counseling including school counselors, teachers, administrators, and parents; and effective counseling strategies in the emotional/social, academic, career, and family area. The following discussion highlights these counseling services.

Unfortunately, and in the educational setting, students who are gifted and talented may feel that they are usually neglected, which in turn influences their motivation, social development, emotional development, and sense of self-worth. Therefore, counselors and teachers must be aware and sensitive enough in responding to their educational needs. In order to optimize their progress, counselors can provide emotional support to the students themselves and their parents, establish preventive group counseling, and work with teachers to maintain building appropriate educational programs (Silverman, 1993; Tassel-Baska, 1993). Academic counseling helps students who are gifted and talented students in order to: provide alternative instructional activities that meet their interests, offer enrichment activities such as field trips, supplying instructional activities that encouraging thinking skills and creative problem solving, allow students to move through the curriculum according to their own speed, and encourage independent learning opportunities (Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1995), using assistive and instructional technology to meet the student's strengths, using flexible learning arrangements that allow the students to work in different groups, and providing students with opportunities to work on assignments that require different learning styles (Salend, 2005).

Emotional and social development of students who are gifted and talented crystallizes through interaction between the variables of the home, the school, the peer relationships, and the society. These students are our future leaders, and the counselors play a crucial role in facilitating their development. The ultimate goal of developmental counseling is self-actualization. Thus, the counselors should recognize the developmental potential of this group of students (Silverman, 1993a). In summary, developmental counseling aims to understand strength and weakness aspects of the students, help students to perceive and aware of their difficulties, acquire student's problem solving skills, develop personal skills, develop self awareness and self assertiveness, and provide students with stress management skills.

Career counseling is described as dynamic, creative, and highly individualized process, and plays an important role in the economic recovery and response to the labor market needs (Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 2003). The term career counseling includes all activities and procedures which will be used to assist the student's interest, abilities and aptitudes to work in order to facilitate transition related careers (Bimrose, 2000). Greene (2003) calls for adequate career counseling services and recommended necessary of changing the nature of these services for students who are gifted and talented, he found throughout his study that this population were suffering from inappropriate career counseling. On the other hand, Greene (2006) maintains that school counselors must take in their minds the importance of modifying complexity and intensity of career counseling activities to respond to advanced level of cognitive development of students who are gifted and talented. Career planning for students who are gifted and talented has not been smooth, especially most of those they do not know what to do for the rest of their lives (Colangelo, 2002). School counselor helps gifted and talented in acquiring them life planning and decision making skills, understanding the process of selecting careers, meeting other gifted persons, understanding their career values and believes (Alreihani, El-Zraigat, & Tannous, 2010).

In Jordan, very limited attention has been paid to the career counseling of students who are gifted and talented at inclusive schools, those students have not always been have the information for planning for a future career. School counselor plays a crucial role in helping gifted and talented students to understand their challenges that result from their giftedness or talent especially when they exhibit early indicators of low achievement, lack of motivation, adolescence challenges, and problems of career choices. Parents of gifted and talented students play an important role in discovering their children problems. Colangelo (2002) views counseling with families of gifted as an area of challenge and reflects the important roles that they play in the relationship with their gifted child and school, he states: *high ability students tend to become from families that are cohesive, child-centered, authoritative, and in which parents engage with their children* (p. 10). Exum (1983) delineates that family counseling with students who are gifted and talented must consider the crucial role of family members other than parents, he demonstrates that school counselors should give their attention and interests for the family as a whole. In fact, the family can help the child in respecting and encouraging his or her giftedness, helping the child to understand his or her giftedness and individual differences, and finally helping the child to understand his or her special needs and how to meet it (Alreihani, El-Zraigat, & Tannous, 2010).

Unfortunately, cooperation between the families of gifted and talented students and Jordanian inclusive schools described at the minimum level, and this collaboration between both sides consider very important and play an important role in understanding the unique needs of this group of students. Thus, activating family counseling plays a crucial role in rebuilding relationship between the families and schools.

Conclusion

Little literature has been written about counseling students who are gifted and talented. The Ministry of Education, through the directorate of special education is currently responsible for the education of students who are gifted and talented. Despite the tremendous work of the directorate of special education in providing special education services to students with special needs, this directorate still faces various challenges like lack of screening and diagnostic tools, inadequately prepared teachers, lack of instructional adaptations, lack of teacher training and support, and lack of parental involvement.

The Ministry of Education in Jordan suffering from screening instruments used in identifying gifted and talented students, and educational programs in order to respond to their unique needs. This group of students needs a variety of educational, vocational, and psychological services. Unfortunately, specialized counseling is not included in established educational programs for students who are gifted and talented.

Indeed, the Ministry of Education through the directorate of special education has established educational programs to meet the special needs of this group of students, but unfortunately, these programs only focusing on academic needs rather than counseling needs. In other words, counseling needs of students who are gifted in talented has limited attention compared to addressing educational needs. Educating students who are gifted and talented follow top-down approach, so the programs established came as a result of educational policy-makers. Their aim was to encouraging the cognitive development of students who are gifted and talented. Students who are gifted and talented have unique characteristics and needs that call for assessment and establishment specialized programs in counseling and education. Surely, successful educational programs require comprehensive assessment, flexibility, and specialized and collaborative counseling. Therefore, the needs of this population may be understood better through understanding their variety characteristics especially emotional aspects that distinguish them from their normal peers.

The difficulties of students who are gifted and talented in accomplishing their emotional health may cause unstable in their inner life and difficulties of achieving their interests and futures wishes and hopes, this may explain low self-concept and lack of executing their personal project. Therefore, it is very important to meet the unique emotional needs of these students throughout appropriate counseling services. These services can prevent them from experience variety problems and help in expanding their personal needs perception.

Focusing on academic achievement of students who are gifted and talented with limited attention toward meeting their emotional needs may create a problem of making decisions about their future career. One conclusion that can be drawn from reviewing counseling programs offered by the universities of Jordan is that counselors preparation programs offered at Jordanian universities are grounded well in counseling process but not in education of giftedness, which means that our school counselors are not prepared to address the unique inner life needs of students who are gifted and talented.

Career counseling and career planning plays a crucial role in responding to the labor market needs through matching student's interest, abilities and aptitudes to work in order to facilitate transition related careers. Lack of skilled and trained career counselor and lack of assessment tools in area of interests and aptitudes make this process difficult to achieve. Limited appropriate career counseling leads this group of students to select unsuitable specialties at the universities or working with not interest jobs. This may lead to experience hopeless feeling and increase their suffering. However, counseling students who are gifted and talented should be supplied by gifted and talented counselor who can understand their inner unique life and future. Fostering success of gifted and talented students in Jordanian inclusive schools needs availability of appropriate gifted education programs, skilled counselors, qualified teachers, and understanding professionals who work with this group of students.

Implication

Reviewing related literature tell us about the necessity of counseling students who are gifted and talented. Numerous implications can be obtained throughout this review. Foremost is the importance of establishing specialized counseling programs for this group of students in area of psychological, academic, and career aspects. Academic counseling should focus on encouraging thinking skills and utilizing creative problem solving. In addition, students who are gifted and talented mostly have mixed feelings about their giftedness or talent, therefore, school counselors must focus on helping those

students express their feelings, as well as respect striving for the future goals. Greene (2003, 2006) claims the importance of oriented career counseling activities for the gifted. Thus, career counseling should improve the awareness of local labor market needs through establishing appropriate career counseling programs supervised by skilled counselors.

One of the most important implications is adding specialized courses in counseling students who are gifted and talented into counselors preparation programs offered universities of Jordan. As suggested by Colangelo (2002) successful counselors of gifted should have the knowledge and expertise both in counseling and gifted and talented education. Another implication drawn from Dababnah (1998) is developing appropriate screening and diagnosis tools in area of interests, aptitudes, and other special needs of students who are gifted and talented.

An important implication that is supported by Colangelo (2002) is that necessary of establishing families counseling programs to enable families with gifted children addressing their needs. Further implications posited by Ysseldyke and Algozzine (1995), Salend (2005), and Schroth and Helfer (2009) reflect the importance role of helping teachers to understand students who are gifted and talented, connecting the curricula with unique special interests of this group of students, and including counseling in gifted and talented educational programs.

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