



Journal for the Education of Gifted Young
Scientists, 4(1), 21-29. December 2015, jegys.org
e-ISSN: 2149- 360X

Research Article

Counseling and Guidance for Malaysian Gifted Students: A Conceptual Framework

Abu Yazid Abu Bakar¹

Received: 14 December 2015

Accepted: 15 January 2016

Abstract

This article put forward a conceptual framework of counseling and guidance for Malaysian gifted students in a school setting. The framework is derived based on various studies conducted at the national center for excellence in gifted education (also known as Pusat PERMATAPintar™ Negara), instituted at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia since 2009. The comprehensive analysis of data sets from these on-going studies is used to develop the proposed framework which encompasses a 'differentiated' and 'specialized' approach for local population of gifted students. The framework encompasses four critical elements in ensuring the provision of effective services for the students namely, the role of counselor, the client's personality and issues, the differentiated approaches, and the therapeutic environment. This article also discusses the implications of implementing this framework in local counseling community.

Keywords

counseling and guidance; conceptual framework; gifted students

To cite this article:

Abu Yazid, A. B. (2016). Counseling and guidance for Malaysian gifted students: a conceptual framework. *Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists*, 4(1), 21-29. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17478/JEGYS.2016115332>

¹ Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. E-mail: yazid3338@ukm.edu.my

Introduction

Gifted students are generally different from their normal peers in several developmental aspects such as physical, psychomotor, emotional, intellectual, and social domains (Touron, Touron & Silvero 2005; Davis & Rimm, 1998). Studies in educational setting revealed that gifted students experience intense social isolation in a regular classroom that may lead to ongoing emotional stress (Wood, 2006; Neihart, Reis, Robinson & Moon, 2002); sometimes, they always feel socially isolated because of their intellectual ability (Neihart, 1999; Silverman, 1993). In addition, gifted students are commonly associated with emotional instability reflected through behaviors such as isolated feelings, oversensitivity and perfectionism, due to their unique self-characteristics and environmental factors (Abu Yazid, 2014a; Abu Yazid & Aliza, 2009; Ng & Sandiyao, 2005). Not only do they experience social and emotional difficulties (Yoo & Moon, 2006; Neihart, 1999), gifted students are also challenged with more affective and psychological issues than other students (Bailey, 2007; Neihart et al., 2002). Some of these issues include anxiety (Cho-Hee Yoon, 2009; Berlin, 2009), identity formation (Graham & Anderson, 2008; Zuo & Tao, 2001) and self-esteem (Vialle, Heaven & Ciarrochi, 2007). Findings of the works mentioned above imply that the community of gifted students living and learning together will require a systematic psychological and socio-emotional support, especially in terms of counseling and guidance provision. Davis and Rimm (1998) stated that the need for counseling and guidance increases with the intellectual capability of an individual. Moreover, Bee (1999) found that children with high intellectual ability were normally facing self-adjustment problem in comparison to his or her peers. In other words, counseling and guidance service is an important component in gifted education (Abu Yazid, 2014b; Noriah & Abu Yazid, 2014; Abu Yazid & Aliza, 2009).

Studies have shown that for every 100,000 children there is at least one gifted child (Clark, 2005; Claxton, 2003). Hence, with a population of 4.5 million children in the school age range of 9 to 15 (Noriah, Rosadah & Siti Fatimah, 2009), Malaysia has its fair share of gifted students. Ironically, the policy on gifted education has never been officially established in Malaysian educational system. However, special programs for selected highly able students to skip grades, and therefore complete elementary education early. Nevertheless, the programs, which started in the early 1960s and whose development had been sporadic and had no specific plan to help the students cope with their secondary and tertiary education at a younger age, came to a halt in the 1970s.

Likewise, the introduction of counseling and guidance services in Malaysian educational system began at about the same period (early 1960s) with the initial focus on vocational guidance. However, after more than half a century, its' provision in local educational setting has never been targeted for specific needs of special population such as the gifted students. As a matter of fact, research in the area of counseling and guidance for gifted learners have been extremely rare, and far in between, in Malaysia (Abu Yazid, 2014a; Noriah & Abu Yazid, 2014; Noriah & Abu Yazid, 2010a). At present, studies on the counseling and guidance needs of Malaysian gifted students are still in its infancy. Indeed, there is very

few literatures describing the psychological issues and counseling needs of Malaysian gifted students. These students are no different from their equivalents in other countries; even though there is no document to support this statement, it is decent to suggest that these students face similar issues on top of the storm and stress of growing up as adolescents in a challenging world. As advocated by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), school counselors are called to proactively serve all students; thus, to best meet the needs of all students, counselors must be aware of the strengths and challenges inherent to variety of students (Bailey, 2007), including gifted students. However, because of the lack of provision in counseling and guidance services, and the fact that Malaysian counselors are not trained to provide such service to gifted learners, the service is not well received in this country. Therefore, having a good provision of counseling and guidance at school, and providing the necessary training to the school counselors would be the initial steps toward providing better services to the gifted students and their families (Abu Yazid, 2014b; Noriah & Abu Yazid, 2010b). Hence, the main objective of this article is to put forward a counseling and guidance framework for gifted students in the Malaysia educational system.

Discussion

Gifted students are challenged with more affective and psychological issues than normal students (Abu Yazid, 2014b; Bailey, 2007; Rimm, 2003; Neihart et al., 2002). Ng and Sandiyao (2005) posited that psycho-socio-emotional issues of gifted students could be classified into six categories, namely interpersonal, physical, personality, learning process, self-confidence, and habitual. Also, for gifted students, emotional sensitivity and emotional intensity are parts of their psychological makeup, which are usually displayed through five areas of overexcitabilities (OE): psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginal, and emotional (Abu Yazid, 2014a; Noriah & Abu Yazid, 2010b). Thus, by virtue of being gifted, these individuals with unique mental abilities and socio-affective characteristics have psychological needs that are remarkably different from their chronological age peers. If proper support and guidance are not given, they could face numerous adjustment issues and might not be able to optimize their full potentials.

Previous studies have revealed that gifted students normally seek counseling and guidance services to come to term with their own giftedness and people's perceptions towards that giftedness, and to cope with the stress of growing up as gifted children (Neihart, 1999; Piechowski, 1999; Moon & Hall, 1998). These students eventually seek or are referred for counseling services for issues related to underachievement, parental and peer relationships, emotional and social adjustment, and stress management (Moon, Kelly & Feldhusen, 1997), inability to express concerns (Peterson, 2003), academic stress and heavy commitment to activities (Peterson, Duncan & Canady, 2007), where such issues have been shown to impact their well-beings. Other research findings have also shown that many of these gifted students seek counseling services to cope with academic stress (Peterson et al., 2007), and to explore their career options (Neihart et. al,

2002; Olszewski-Kubilius & Scott, 1992). Thus, to facilitate the gifted students' learning process, parents, educators and counselors, need to understand their academic and non-academic needs, as well as be aware of even the slightest cognitive, affective and behavioural differences that they display outside the norms.

The Malaysian National Gifted Centre (also known as Pusat PERMATApintar™ Negara), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia provides resourceful counseling and guidance services to the students and carries out research in order to improve the quality of the services. Findings of the center's recent research on the students' perception towards the provision of counseling and guidance services reveal that only 30% of the students surveyed would talk to teachers and peers if they had personal problem, whereas another 60% preferred to solve their personal problems themselves. Surprisingly, only 7% would willingly turn to counselors for help while only 3% of the students chose to share problems with their parents. Another significant finding of this recent study is that female students have the higher tendency to seek help compared to male students. Data from this study also indicates that career counseling and academic guidance –particularly pertaining to the college/university information search, career path advice, and enhancement of study skills– are the two most preferred types of service, while family counseling is the least preferred one. The above findings brought about a number of implications as follow:

- the respondents were more comfortable discussing their problems with their peers than the counselors or their parents,
- female students were more willing to share their issues with others than their male counterparts,
- female gifted students were more aware of their career options, and were more willing to explore their options than their male counterparts,
- female students were more concerned about their future career in addition to their academic performance.

Based on the above mentioned findings, it could be implied that Malaysian gifted students were in dire need for an effective counseling and guidance services in order to support them in the education system. However, the dilemma is that the educational counseling and guidance in Malaysia is provided for general population of students; hence, the specific needs of gifted students are not being catered for. In other words, the understanding of the best services approach for gifted students is almost nil among the local community of counselors, especially the school counselors. According to Wood (2010), school counselors play a vital role in meeting the needs of gifted students, but, they may not know how best to serve this unique population of students because up to now there is a lack of structured, standardized, and empirically tested best practices of counseling and guidance for gifted students. While there are many studies on best practices in the literature, studies on best practices provided by school counselors for the population of gifted students are scarce. Zaffrann and Colangelo (1977), Moon et al. (1997), Peterson (2006), and Wood (2010) insinuated that gifted students requires differentiated counseling and guidance approach which involves creative approaches that take into consideration the

students' unique affective and cognitive development. The approaches should be varied from one student to another, depending on his or her need, in which the approach chosen should be individualized and meet the needs of each student. In addition, Mahoney and Lyddon (1988) and Ryan (1999, 2001) recommended that gifted students should be provided with specialized counseling and guidance services in order to meet their giftedness and talents. Specifically, the 'specialized' counseling and guidance approach for gifted students should take into consideration the counselor's role, personality, the therapeutic environment, and the theoretical framework and strategic approaches; for instance, humanistic, cognitive or behavioral used in the counseling and guidance sessions (Wood, 2010; VanTassel-Baska, 1990, 2005).

In tandem, majority of researchers in the field of gifted education shares the opinion that the provision of counseling and guidance services for gifted students is not only critical, but it has to be specifically tailored to meet the unique needs of this population (Wood, 2010; VanTassel-Baska, 1990, 2005; Ryan, 1999, 2001; Mahoney & Lyddon, 1988). Consequently, taking into account of these experts' views and combines it with findings from continuous studies conducted within its compound, researchers at Pusat PERMATApintarTM Negara, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia have initiated an effort to develop a conceptual framework of gifted students' counseling and guidance service relevant to local context. They adapt the provisional concept of 'differentiated' and 'specialized' proposed by those established scholars, combine it with the 'one-size-does not-fit-all' approach, and come up with a conceptual framework which comprises four main components (refer Figure 1 for details). Specifically, this framework stresses that in order to develop a holistically conducive helping relationship for the gifted students, it is essential for the counselor to understand their own role and their clients' special traits, skills and issues. Also, the surrounding must be therapeutically supportive in which, the relationship is built on mutual respect, understanding and trust between the two parties. Finally, the approach itself must be unique and individualized; thus, the assessment is proposed as the starting point of the whole process. Concomitantly, the framework is somehow or rather aligned with ideas proposed by Zaffrann and Colangelo (1977), Moon et al. (1997), and Peterson (2006) which suggest that school counselors who keen in providing services for gifted students, when providing services, must take into consideration five elements namely the students' profile and issues being presented, the working therapeutic environment, the interventions proposed, the termination process, and the follow-up process.

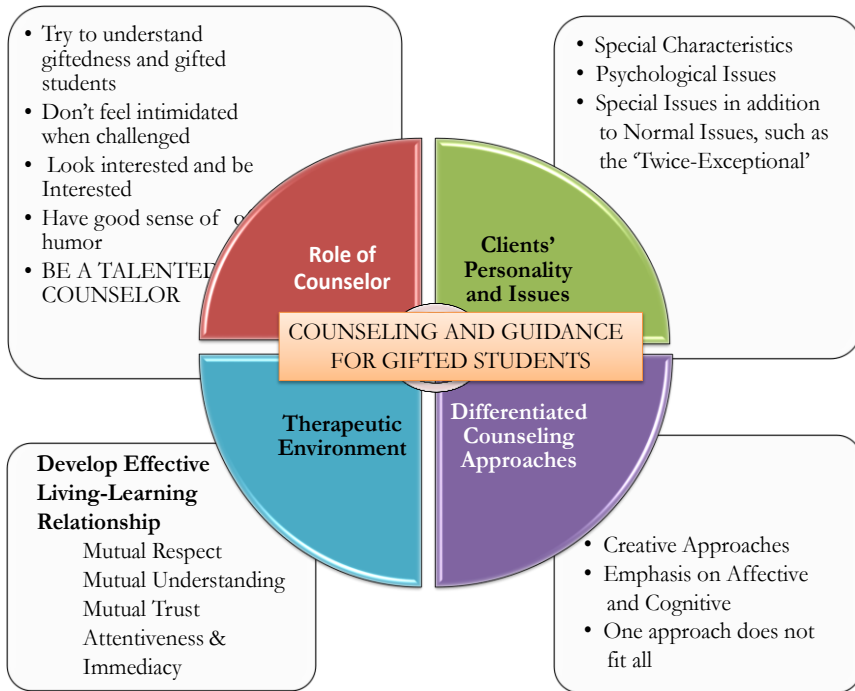


Figure 1. A conceptual framework of counseling and guidance for Malaysian gifted students

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the discussed conceptual framework of counseling and guidance for gifted students serves as concrete evidence that Malaysia has been seriously putting efforts to ensure the well-beings of the nation's future generation. Even though gifted education is not yet inserted as a mainstream educational paradigm, it does not prevent local researchers to continue carry out studies in this field. Thus, it is not going to be stopped because the potential of expanding the study in this area is considerably boundless. If the proposed framework could be understood and accepted by the counseling community, especially among the practitioners in school setting, it would be a great contribution not only to the local field of counseling and guidance, but also to the national paradigm of gifted education as a whole.

Nonetheless, the challenges ahead are considerably numerous, ranging from whether Malaysian school counselors are ready to deliver such 'differentiated' services, to how much exposure do the counselors have on such a 'specialized' approach. Moreover, it should also worth to explore whether the Malaysian counselor educators' program is capable of accommodating such approach in their curriculum. It is also relevant to debate on what roles should be assumed by parties like Malaysian Counseling Association, Malaysian Board of Counselors and Ministry of Education, in accommodating such transition by providing clear

justifications and directions. Until everything is sorted out, probably with the establishment of a clear and well-documented policy, research activities in counseling and guidance provision for local gifted students should continuously be explored.

Biodata of the Author

Dr. Abu Yazid Abu Bakar is a senior lecturer of counseling and guidance at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. He holds a PhD in counseling and guidance from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and a postgraduate qualification in gifted education from the University of New South Wales, Australia. His research focuses on school counseling and guidance, gifted and talented education, and psychology.



Affiliation: Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan MALAYSIA

E-mail: yazid3338@ukm.edu.my OR yazidtdm@yahoo.com

Phone: +60389217697

References

- Abu Yazid, A. B. (2014a). *Perkhidmatan Kaunseling Pelajar Pintar dan Berbakat*. Ph.D. Thesis, Bangi: Fakulti Pendidikan, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Abu Yazid, A. B. (2014b). Depression, anxiety, stress and adjustments among Malaysian gifted learners: Implication towards school counseling provision. *International Education Studies*, 7(13), 6-13.
- Abu Yazid, A. B., & Aliza, A. (2009). Sokongan psikologikal dan sosio-emosi pelajar pintar cerdas. In Noriah M. I., Rosadah A. M. & Siti Fatimah M. Y. (Eds.), *PERMATApintar: Pengalaman UKM*. Bangi: UKM.
- Bailey, C. L. (2007). Social and emotional needs of gifted students: What school counselors need to know to most effectively serve this diverse student population. Paper presented at the 2007 Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Conference, October 11-14, Columbus, Ohio.
- Bee, H. (1999). *The Growing Child: An Applied Approach (2nd ed.)*. New York, NY: Longman.
- Berlin, J. E. (2009). It's all a matter of perspective: Student perceptions on the impact of being labeled gifted and talented. *Roeper Review*, 31, 217-223.
- Clark, L. (2005). Gifted and Growing. *Educational Leadership*, 63(3), 56-60.
- Claxton, C. (2003). Help for the Top 10 per cent. *Times Educational Supplement*, 30-32.
- Cho-Hee, Y. (2009). Self-regulated learning and instructional factors in the scientific inquiry of scientifically gifted Korean middle school students. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 53(3), 203-216.
- Davis, G. A., & Rimm, S. A. (1998). *Education of the Gifted and Talented (4th ed.)*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Graham, A., & Anderson, K. (2008). "I have to be three steps ahead": Academically gifted African American male students in an urban high school on the tension between an ethnic and academic identity. *Urban Review*, 40(4), 472-499.
- Mahoney, M. J., & Lyddon, W. J. (1988). Recent development in cognitive approaches to counseling and psychotherapy. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 16, 190-234.

- Moon, S. M., & Hall, A. S. (1998). Family therapy with intellectually and creatively gifted children. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 24, 59-80.
- Moon, S. M., Kelly, K. R., & Feldhusen, J. (1997). Specialized counseling services for gifted youth and their families: A needs assessment. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 41, 16-25.
- Neihart, M. (1999). The impact of giftedness on psychological well-beings: What does the empirical literature says? *Roeper Review*, 22, 10-17.
- Neihart, M., Reis, S. M., Robinson, N. M., & Moon, S. M. (2002). *The social and emotional development of gifted children: What do we know?* Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Ng S. F., & Sandiyao, S. (2005). Masalah sosio-emosi kanak-kanak pintar cerdas. *Masalah Pendidikan Universiti Malaya*, 5-12.
- Noriah, M. I., & Abu Yazid, A. B. (2014). Counseling services for Malaysian gifted students: An initial study. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 36, 372-383.
- Noriah, M. I., & Abu Yazid, A. B. (2010a). Psychological issues and the need for counseling services among Malaysian gifted students. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 5, 665-673.
- Noriah M. I., & Abu Yazid, A. B. (2010b). Counseling for gifted students: Implication for a differentiated approach. *The International Journal of Learning*, 17(6), 377-391.
- Noriah, M. I., Rosadah A. M., & Siti Fatimah, M. Y. (2009). (Eds.), *PERMATAPintar: Pengalaman UKM*. Bangi: Pusat PERMATAPintar Negara.
- Olszewski-Kubilius, P. M., & Scott, J. M. (1992). An investigation of the college and career counseling needs of economically disadvantaged, minority gifted students. *Roeper Review*, 14, 141-148.
- Peterson, J. S. (2003). An argument for proactive attention to affective concerns of gifted adolescents. *Journal for Secondary Gifted Education*, 14, 62-71.
- Peterson, J. S., Duncan, N., & Canady, K. (2007). Consultation related to giftedness: A school counseling perspective. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 17(4), 273-296.
- Peterson, J. S. (2006). Addressing counseling needs of gifted students. *Professional School Counseling*, 10(1), 43-51.
- Piechowski, M. M. (1999). Overexcitabilities. In M. A. Runco and S. R. Pritzker (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Creativity* (pp. 325-334). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Rimm, S. B. (2003). Underachievement: A national epidemic. In N. Colangelo and G. A. Davis (Eds.). *Handbook of Gifted Education*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Ryan, J. J. (1999). Behind the mask: Exploring the need for specialized counseling for gifted females. *Gifted Child Today Magazine*, 22(5), 14-17.
- Ryan, J. J. (2001). Specialized counseling: The social-emotional needs of gifted adolescents. *Tempo Newsletter*, 21(1), 6-7 and 17-18.
- Silverman, L. (1993). *Counseling the Gifted & Talented*. Denver, CO: Love Publishing Co.
- Touron, J., Touron, Silvero M. (2005). The Center for Talented Youth Spain: An initiative to serve highly able students. *High Ability*, 15, 121-135.
- VanTassel-Baska, J. (2005). Gifted programs and services: What are the nonnegotiables. *Theory Into Practice*, 44(2), 90-97.
- VanTassel-Baska, J. (1990). *A Practical Guide to Counseling the Gifted in a School Setting*. Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children
- Vialle, W., Heaven, P. C. L. & Ciarrochi, J. (2007). On being gifted, but sad and misunderstood: Social, emotional, and academic outcomes of gifted students in the Wollongong Youth Study. *Educational Research & Evaluation*, 13(6), 569-586.
- Wood, S. (2006). *Gifted and Talented Adolescents Experiences in School Counseling*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Virginia: The College of William and Mary.

- Wood, S. (2010). Best practices in counseling the gifted in school: What's really happening. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 54(1), 42-58.
- Yoo, J. E. & Moon, S. M. (2006). Counseling needs of gifted students: An analysis of intake form at a university-based counseling center. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 50(1), 52-61.
- Zaffrann, R. T., & Colangelo, N. (1977). Counseling with gifted and talented students. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 21, 305-321.
- Zuo, L. & Tao, L. (2001). Importance of personality in gifted children's identity formation. *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 12(4), 212-224.