

## THE SAUDI EXPERIENCE CONCERNING THE CARE OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENT

Attalah Mohamed AlatawiMohdZuriGhaniAswatiHamzah\*

### **Abstract**

Talented Students started to receive educational services in Saudi Arabia in 1990. This paper shows the Saudi experience concerning the care of gifted and talented student with its five stage. This paper shows a glance at the Talented students' programs in Saudi Arabia with its three branches, which are: First: accelerating child transfer to upper levels. Second: classes and private groups. Third: educational enrichment in regular classrooms. Finally, Talented students in Saudi Arabia were highlighted in order to put Talented students in Saudi Arabia within its proper framework.

**Keywords:** Gifted ,talented in Saudi Arabia

\* University Science Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia

## Introduction

The one who has willingness or an exceptional ability or an outstanding performance when compared to his peers in one or more of the areas estimated by the community, especially in the areas of mental superiority, innovative thinking, academic achievement and special skills and abilities, needs special education that cannot be afforded by the school offered within the ordinary curricula of study, and develop his capabilities. This cannot be done unless there is a teacher who has special skills to invest the student's potential (Rayni 2001). The theory of concurrent thinking is a new talented theory that adds to the patterns of thinking a new pattern (Abdeen, 2015). Concurrent thinking is defined as the process of thinking about multiple topics at the same time (i.e., simultaneously doing more than one mental process), thereby processing more than one task at a time. This type of thinking is conducted with high proficiency (Abdeen, 2014).

### 1. General information about Saudi Arabia

The KSA is located in the Middle East in the Arabian Peninsula, and has an area of about two million meters square with a population of about 29 million people. The main language of KSA is Arabic and Islam is the major religion. The KSA is divided into 13 provinces. Tabuk occupies about 7% of the area of KSA and is located in the north western region of KSA (Figure 1). Tabuk has a population of about 0.9 million people (Saudi Geological Survey, 2012). Tabuk city is the capital of Tabuk province.

The school education in KSA follows the traditional system in dividing it to: elementary, middle, and secondary. The educational system is a gender-based segregated. The government had announced that the education is on the top of the priorities of the country, and is eagerly involved in developing, adapting curricula and training of teachers. In the past two years, the KSA adapted the curricula of McGraw Hills for its science track. Thus far, the educational system employs the rote learning (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013).



**Figure 2. 1: The KSA geographical and province map. (Saudi Arabia, administrative divisions - ar - colored.png,2015)**

## 2. Gifted and Talent student in Saudi Arabia

The KSA was the first to establish in 1948 a special section concerned with training the teachers of special education in several tracks including the academic achievement and innovation. Thus, Saudi Arabia can be considered as the nation who had to make sure about the establishment of an academic path at the undergraduate level to graduate special type of teachers to educate the gifted and gifted and talented students (Abdul –Jabbar, 2001).

The concern for the gifted and talented student basically started in the KSA in 1992 through studying the draft program for the identification and care of the gifted and talented student that was established in 1997 with the support and preparation of the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology and it was applied in the schools affiliated to the Ministry of Education. A public administration was also established in this regard to supervise the identification of the gifted and talented student in 2002. Among the most important objectives was to conduct the techniques and appropriate software to provide the educational, psychological and social care for the gifted and talented student (Al-Qatiee et al, 2000).

### 3. Centers of the gifted and talented student in the Saudi Arabia:

Centre of the gifted and talented student is an educational institution operating in accordance with the prevailing social system in the KSA working with a new thought and a new method. It seeks to achieve the objectives of its education policy, particularly in the area of the gifted and talented student, through a range of programs and services geared to different age groups wishing to belong to it. It is run by a group of specialists and financed by private and public institutions. The center aims at discovering and taking care of the gifted and talented student in the various fields, age levels and social groups. It also aims at satisfying their needs and at providing the necessary resources for their care and directing them towards the best investment. The talent center works to build a relationship between the gifted and talented student and the different agencies and sectors that have an interest in this vain. In addition, the public management for taking care of the gifted and talented student in the Ministry of Education scientifically administer a number of talent centers across the KSA and such talent centers are connected to the departments of education in different regions and provinces. Such centers were opened in a number of cities including: Riyadh, Taif, Jeddah, Medina, Mecca, Dammam, Al-Ahsaetc(Ministry of Education in the KSA of Saudi Arabia, 2008).

These centers include activity groups with leaders, supervisors, mentors and technicians of more experience and ability than that available in schools. Adequate budgets are allocated and students find much more time for exercising the activities through weekends, mid-year break and the summer vacation. The talent centers received gifted and talented students nominated by schools, clubs and societies, mosques, and the tests are carried out to identify their talents in a scientific manner, and then direct them towards the appropriate educational activities where they find care at a higher level than before (Al-Zahrani, 2000).

King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology is an institution created to take care of science and technology and to solve society problems through scientific research based on objectivity and field experience concerning the importance of this issue. Further participation of two main institutions namely the Ministry of Education and the General Presidency for Girls' Education and their responsibilities in this matter, a national project has been adopted for the development of education including the program of identifying the gifted and talented student and caring for

them(Abu Nian,1997).

Despite the great development in the field of education in the KSA during the last twenty years concerning its spread, expansion and diversity of its programs and upgrading, providing its potentials and including the mentally retarded children and the handicapped in the care and attention, but the gifted and talented student have not been received the adequate attention and care in terms of the scientific efforts exerted to identify them and to provide them with the educational programs appropriate for their care and learning. This category blessed and graced by the talents and distinct abilities, should get a greater degree of care and attention from the age of childhood at home, at school and community at large because of the great payoff in the development and progress of society in return(Ministry of Education in the KSA of Saudi Arabia, 2008).

Some signs of interest in this category started during the ceremony of celebrating the academically top students in the areas of education and giving them some awards, material and moral, and the establishment of awards of princes in some areas, and the efforts of the General Presidency for Youth Care in encouraging talents in the arts and culture through clubs and art galleries. Furthermore, the International Award of King Faisal in the service of Islam and Islamic studies and Arabic literature, medicine and science, emanating from King Faisal's Charity Foundation, represents an important symbol of the extent to which the estimation of the leaders of this country of the scientific excellence at the level of senior scientists and thinkers and the recognition of the distinct people in the fields of religion, literature, science and medicine at the level of the whole world.

It is possible to pay attention to the talents and excellence from childhood when the talents and abilities are potentials viable to grow and aptitudes in need care and encouragement. It is evident that these talents exist and they are possibly realized when the kids grow up and they become capable of expressing themselves and their abilities in the progress and development of society. There are many centers and activities in some developed countries which reflect this concern such as the Future Scientists and the Young Mathematicians, the Olympic of the mind Contest and the award of the President of the United States for scientific excellence and others. The talent starts with the beginning of life as a potential or possibility that is probable to grow and

become clear with the growth and development of the individual in different stages of his early life if there is a good environment in which it grows and flourishes until it reaches the stage of achieving production and work. If it does not find the adequate care and appropriate environment, it shrinks, disappears and then loses its usefulness for the individual and society (It is possible to pay attention to the talents and excellence from childhood when the talents and abilities are potentials viable to grow and aptitudes in need care and encouragement. It is evident that these talents exist and they are possibly realized when the kids grow up and they become capable of expressing themselves and their abilities in the progress and development of society (Alsharee et al, 2008).

There are many centers and activities in some developed countries which reflect this concern such as the Future Scientists and the Young Mathematicians, the Olympic of the mind Contest and the award of the President of the United States for scientific excellence and others. The talent starts with the beginning of life as a potential or possibility that is probable to grow and become clear with the growth and development of the individual in different stages of his early life if there is a good environment in which it grows and flourishes until it reaches the stage of achieving production and work. If it does not find the adequate care and appropriate environment, it shrinks, disappears and then loses its usefulness for the individual and society (Alsharee et al, 2008).

#### **4. The Saudi experience concerning the care of gifted and talented student**

The development of taking care of the gifted and talented student has gone through many stages as described in the next subsections (Ministry of Education in the KSA of Saudi Arabia, 2008):

##### **4.1 The first stage**

In the years 1990 - 1996, the official efforts combined with King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology, the Ministry of Education and the General Presidency for Girls' Education to start a research program that begins with identifying gifted and talented students and taking care of them in different educational levels. In this way a national research project emerged under entitled 'identification and care program for the gifted and talented student' which resulted in the preparation of standards in intelligence and creativity. It also included the preparation of two

experimental programs in science and mathematics as prototypes for the gifted and talented student programs in the KSA of Saudi Arabia.

#### 4.2 The second stage

Identification of the gifted and talented student: This program was founded according to the minutes of the meeting held on 10/29/1417 headed by the Minister of Education, the Vice President of King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology and a research team (Al Sharee, et al). The project was adopted and applied in the schools affiliated to the Ministry of Education by providing all potential human and technical resources needed to implement it and by assigning a working group headed by Abdulnafee Al Sharee and the membership of the research team to implement the program and to provide a detailed account according to the Ministerial Decree No. 877 dated in 8/9/1996. Besides, another program was inaugurated for taking care of the gifted and talented student females in the General Presidency for Girls' Education in 1997. The work actually started in the second semester of the academic year 1998

#### 4.3 The third stage

The establishment of public administration for the gifted and talented student: In the pursuit of the ministry to expand the programs of the gifted and talented student, there was a need to create a public administration for the gifted and talented student, representing the educational system that would implement the policy of the KSA in taking care of the gifted and talented student and achieve of the objectives aimed by the Ministry of Knowledge. Then, a public administration was established to supervise the process of identifying the gifted and talented student according to the Ministerial Decree No. 58054 dated in 6/6/2002.

#### 4.4 The fourth stage

Establishing a management for the gifted and talented female student care: Because of the expansion of the care programs for the gifted and talented student females, a department of gifted and talented student females care was established in 02/05/2001. In 25/5/2002, this management was linked to His Excellency the Deputy Minister of Education for Girls.

#### 4.5 The fifth stage

Unifying the efforts in taking care of the gifted and talented student: In order to unify the policies and business strategy in the field of caring for the gifted and talented student in the KSA, the decision of His Excellency, the Minister of Education, No. 373373 dated 24/6/2002 was issued. It assigned the responsibilities of the general management to take care of the gifted and talented student, male and female alike.

#### 5. Programs Offered by the Ministry of Education for Talented Students

First: accelerating child transfer to upper levels. Second: classes and private groups. Third: educational enrichment in regular classrooms.

The program for talented care in science and mathematics includes the following (Al Sharee et al, 2010):

1 - Enrichment program in science which includes:

- a) The establishment of specialized departments in the Ministry of Education and general directorates for girls' education for talented students to work on:
- b) Making use of talented-students detection (identification) tools after being circulated in KSA
- c) Studying and discussing the most appropriate methods for talented students in all disciplines.
- d) Developing and monitoring the implementation of programs for talented students in KSA in all disciplines.
- e) Establishing a highly specialized center for talented students in Science and mathematics supervised by the Department of Awareness at King Abdul Aziz City of Science and Technology to provide summer programs for talented students in science and mathematics at the secondary level.
- f) Adding educational enrichment activities to the science curriculum at all educational levels for boys and girls to be carried out only by talented students already identified by detection tests applied in the Saudi environment.
- g) Establishing a specialized center for talented students in science in each educational department for boys that provides programs especially in the evening or during weekends or the summer vacation or a combination of them. In big cities such as Riyadh more than one center are



established to facilitate transportation and take into account the geographical distribution of students.

h) Developing the skills of research among science teachers in the course of preparing them through training courses.

i) The need for a subject or more in the curriculum of educational training in the colleges of education and teachers' colleges in KSA that care about introducing talented students to the teachers of the future in terms of their characteristics and how to detect them and the methods of taking care of them.

2 - Enrichment program in mathematics:

a) Teaching advanced topics in mathematics that focus on solving usual and unusual issues.

b) Using computers in teaching talented students by teaching programming and taking advantage of the mathematical programs in addition to providing an opportunity for students to access information database and link all that to what is taught in the classroom.

c) Providing a learning environment that contains the necessary educational tools that link the abstract material to the scientific aspect.

d) Choosing an appropriate time for students to enroll in such programs when they are seen exhausted after attending their usual school courses in the morning.

e) Taking advantage of some of the existing programs in some of the developed countries in this area but taking into account the suitability of the educational environment in KSA.

### Conclusion

First, this article presents in-depth perception of reality pedagogical educational services Talented in the future soon. Second, the paper describes about the Programs Offered by the Ministry of Education for Talented Students in Saudi Arabia . Finally, propositions are offered to develop and deliver of service for talented students toward a better society

### Reference

1. Abdeen, S. (2014). Theory Concurrent thinking. *Life science journals*,11(12) , USA.
2. Abdeen, S. (2015). Think out the box with Concurrent thinking theory. *IPCiRE2015*,USM.

3. Abdul-Jabbar, A. ( 2001 ). The role played by the College of Education (Special Education Department ) in caring for the gifted and talented student: The present plans and the future programs. A working paper submitted at the first forum of the institutions of the gifted and talented student in the Arab Gulf States for the period , 18-19 Shawwal 1421 AH corresponding 13-14 January, 2001, Riyadh : King Abdul Aziz and his men for the Gifted and talented student, Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States.
4. Abu Nian, Ibrahim Saad&Aldhabian, Salih bin Musa. (1418AH --1997 AD). Methods and ways of discovering the gifted and talented student in the KSA of Saudi Arabia. A research presented at the symposium " Methods of discovering the gifted and talented student in the basic education in the Gulf Arab states" held in the city of Dubai, United Arab Emirates for the period 14-16/4/1415 which corresponds to 19-20/9/1994. Riyadh: Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States.
5. Aljughaiman, A. &Grigorenko E. (2013). Growing Up Under Pressure: The Cultural and Religious Context of the Saudi System of Gifted Education. Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 36: 307.
6. Alsharee, et al. (1993). The caring program of the talented in Science and Mathematics.
7. Al-Zahrani, A. (2000). The Gifted and talented student Center in Taif: A humble experience for the gifted and talented student care in the Arab world. A research presented at the Second Arabic Scientific Conference of taking care of the gifted and talented student and outstanding entitled "The creative education is the best investment for the future". October, 31- November, 2. Amman (Jordan): Arab Council for the gifted and talented student and outstanding.
8. Ministry of Education in the KSA of Saudi Arabia, 2008
9. Saudi Geological Survey (2012). The Saudi Commission for Geological Survey, Jeddah, KSA.