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THE CHALLENGES OF PLANNING INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAMMES FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

Abstract: Individualized programmes for gifted students are one of the ways in which curricula can be adapted to take account of the identified educational needs of gifted students. Planning is a key phase in ensuring that these programmes are carried out in a high-quality manner. This article explores the challenges faced in the planning of individualized programmes for gifted students, such as: purpose and objectives, selection of a concept of 'giftedness' and of a curriculum model, the planning process, the engagement of students, parents and teachers, and the planning of the document.

Key words: individualized programmes for gifted students, curriculum models, planning process, planning of the document, engagement.

Introduction

Today's schools are faced with the major challenge of developing educational programmes capable of satisfying the various educational needs of all students. Gifted and talented children are one group of students with complex educational needs. Individualized programmes for gifted students are one of the ways in which curricula can be adapted to take into account the identified educational needs of gifted students. They develop plans in which targets and activities are planned in order to adapt the school and extra-curricular programme to the needs of these children. The planning of individualized programmes for gifted students depends on school legislation, the concept of 'giftedness', the curriculum model, and the ability of the school and student system to implement these programmes.

The concept of 'giftedness' affects the methodology by which gifted students are identified and the strategy of work with gifted students at school (White Paper on Schooling and Education, 2011, p. 331). One of the aims of the identification process can be to identify gifted students, which leads to them being labelled as such; another is to identify student's educational needs (Robinson, Shore & Enersen, 2007). The concept of giftedness is not dependent solely on whether the term is culturally acceptable, but also on the capacities available within the school system (Balchin, 2009).

Europe is oriented towards the inclusive education of gifted students, with the goal of the identification process being to identify educational needs. Under these principles of inclusion, gifted students are educated in ordinary classes (Juriševič, 2012). In 17 countries, therefore,

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gifted students are educated in ordinary classes at primary-school level (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2009), where the method of teaching and learning enables different forms of differentiation and individualisation, as well as enriched programmes. In 15 European countries, individualisation is one of the ways in which the curriculum is adapted to the needs of gifted students, while the planning of individualised programmes is mandatory in three countries and optional in 15 (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2009). International research, which also included non-European countries, has shown that gifted students are educated in ordinary classes in 30% of countries and educated partly in ordinary classes and partly outside them in 22% of countries (Freeman, Raffan & Warwick, 2010).

Inclusive education is defined as the strengthening of the capacities of the school system so that it reaches all students and responds to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults by increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities (Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education, 2009). This envisages a personalised approach to teaching for all students, as well as the planning of individualized education programmes for those students with more complex educational needs (Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education, 2009, p. 15). Campbell and Neelands (2007, p. 151) define individualized learning as a collective framework that directs the individual development of learning. The key aim is to strengthen the school and learning system to meet the diversity of educational needs and of student interests. In order to meet this objective, learning and teaching standards must be raised and must be derived from the characteristics and interests of students (Miliband 2006, p. 24). Miliband (2006) highlights school organisation and a wider community capable of supporting realisation of the individualized approach as key challenges. International research has shown up the following obstacles in the capacity of the school system: teacher-training, lack of money, a deficient attitude towards the education of gifted students, conflicts with school management, problems of identification and a lack of time (Freeman Raffan & Warwick, 2010). In the past, individualized programmes for students were aimed at students with special needs. An extensive look at the literature on individual plans for students with special needs highlights difficulties relating to the process, particularly as it relates to the cooperation of parents (social and cultural barriers, logistical problems with the cooperation of parents, a lack of information on the process and of an active role in the education process), the cooperation of teachers (a lack of knowledge for planning, lack of ability to work within a team) and the cooperation of students (inability to take part in the process in an active way) (Mitchell et al., 2010). Challenges have also been highlighted in document preparation, such as a lack of clarity regarding the purpose of individualized programmes, unrealistic and unsuitable objectives, and poor implementation of objectives in regular education programmes (Mitchell, Morton & Hornby, 2010).

Research problem

The basic research problem is the planning of individualized programmes for gifted students and the identification of the key challenges faced when trying to plan them to a high degree of quality. The purpose of the research is to define the key challenges in planning individualized programmes and to define the criteria and issues relating to high-quality planning.

Methodology

The basic research method is that of reviewing the literature and compiling a qualitative analysis of three approaches to the planning of individualized programmes: the Total Talent Portfolio, Canada; the Advanced Learning Plan, USA; and an individualized programme for gifted students based on Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent, New Zealand.

The qualitative analysis of the three approaches covers an analysis of the legislative documents, the document pertaining to the individualized programme and any evaluation studies from the countries in question.

Results

1 Definition of the key challenges in planning individualized programmes for gifted students

The following challenges in planning individualized programmes have been identified on the basis of a review of the research and a qualitative analysis of the three approaches:

- a definition of the aims and objectives of the individualized programmes;
- selection of the concept of giftedness and the curriculum model;
- the way in which students, parents and schools are involved in the planning process;
- the planning of the document.

1.1 Aims and objectives of educating gifted students and the planning of individualized programmes for gifted students

Bernal (2003) highlights the problem of defining the aims and objectives of educating gifted students, while Renzulli (2016) examines two aims of education. The first is to provide students with the possibility of self-fulfilment in one or more areas (Renzulli, 2016). The second, wider aim is to increase the number of individuals capable of resolving problems in contemporary society, with the aim of enabling them to become producers of knowledge and art and not only users of existing knowledge (Renzulli, 2016). Subotnik et al. (2011, p. 4) define two objectives in the education of gifted students: exceptional achievements and eminence. According to Bernal (2003), the aim of educating gifted students is to develop gifted adults. Owing to the protracted nature of the process involved, this requires a highly individualized educational plan.

An objective such as the education of students identified as gifted presents a major challenge to an inclusive school (Bernal, 2003). Establishing a monolithic concept of giftedness or a certain type of giftedness limits access for a larger number of students with different types of giftedness, and limits the options for tailoring the curriculum and planning individualized programmes. Sternberg has had a strong influence on changing the monolithic understanding of intelligence with his definition of intelligence as a collective and balanced ability to adapt, formulate and select the environment so that the aims of the person as well as of society are achieved (Sternberg, 1997). Curriculum models and individualised programmes for gifted students are often derived from a multi-dimensional concept of giftedness. A multi-dimensional understanding of the construct of giftedness includes a variety of characteristics, skills and abilities manifested in different ways (Reis & Renzulli, 2010, p. 308). This

understanding leads to a wider identification of the educational needs of gifted students, and covers more students.

Modern policies relating to the education of gifted children are directed towards the development of a basic curriculum aimed at all students. Therefore, all students are involved in methods of teaching and learning that are characteristic of those deployed for gifted students. This development came in the 'autonomous learner' curriculum model, which was first developed for the education of gifted students and subsequently proved to be effective in the development of lifelong learning for all learners (Betts & Kercher, 1999). The aim is to improve outcomes and develop a fully functioning autonomous learner. An autonomous learner is one who solves problems and develops new ideas via a combination of divergent and convergent thinking, with minimum external direction in selected areas (Betts and Knapp, 1981). The Enrichment Triad Model is directed towards developing gifted behaviours (Renzulli, 2016). Purcell and Renzulli (1988) have developed a model of complete development of talents that also includes in enrichment programmes those students not identified as gifted. The Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent envisages a long-term programme of aims and activities for developing talents so as to enable the development of giftedness into talent (Gagné, 2003). The mega model envisages a lifelong process that supports the development of ability up to eminence (Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius & Worrel, 2011).

1.2 Selection of a concept of giftedness and a curriculum model to serve as the basis for individualized programmes for gifted students

Individualized programmes for gifted students are derived from a variety of concepts of giftedness and curriculum models, which must be harmonised with school legislation. Mayer (2005) defines the principles of the practical models, where the construct of giftedness is precisely defined and measurable, the theory is clear and tested, and the conclusions on the educational strategies are researched and credible. A high-quality curriculum model has a logical connection between the definition of giftedness, the recommended identification and the programmed activities (Renzulli, 2016). This means that there is coordination between the identification processes and the programmes (Olszewski-Kubilius and Thomson, 2012, p. 396). Effective programming encompasses the integration of an advanced curriculum with teaching strategies, with the aim of developing learning activities through which the gifted student is able to achieve the objectives and results set (Callahan et al., 2015, p. 1).

Van Tassel-Baska and Brown (2007) have examined two effective curriculum models for gifted students in the US: the Enrichment Triad Model (Renzulli, 1976) and the Talent Search Model (Julian Stanley). Both these curriculum models have the longest tradition: at least two decades of research, development and implementation (Van Tassel-Baska and Brown, 2007). Some curriculum models are oriented solely towards curricular adjustments (in terms of their didactic methodology). These are the Integrated Curriculum Model (Van Tassel-Baska, 1986), the Parallel Curriculum Model (Tomlinson et al., 2002) and the Level of Service Approach. Other models take a more integrated approach and, in addition to curricular adaptation, include a concept of giftedness and development elements that support the planning of individualized programmes for gifted students. These are the Autonomous Learner Model (Betts & Kercher, 1999), the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (Gagné, 2003), the Enrichment Triad Model (Renzulli, 1976), and the Purdue Three-Stage Enrichment Model.

Renzulli's theoretical four-part curriculum model provides for the development of an individualized programme for gifted students called the 'Total Talent Portfolio'. The concept of the portfolio was developed by Purcell and Renzulli (1988). It has been aligned with school legislation in Nova Scotia (Canada) through the Education Act (2012) and the Public School Program and Special Education Policy (2008), and is part of the support materials implementing the 'Challenge for Excellence: Enrichment and Gifted Education Resource Guide' (2006). One of the goals of the public school programme is to pay due attention to the diversity of learning experiences in which students are actively involved, and the extensions through which a student may satisfy their needs. The Total Talent Portfolio also supports the LifeWork Portfolio, which supports the student's career orientation.

The Autonomous Learner Model (Betts, 1985), and the Response to Intervention curriculum model developed from it, envisage an advanced learning plan. This curriculum model is being implemented in the US states of Colorado, Georgia and Kentucky (Johnsen Parker & Farah, 2015, p. 227). The model is defined as a framework that promotes a well-integrated system that brings together general, substitute and special education and education of the gifted, thereby enabling high-quality standards-based teaching and intervention that match the students' academic, social-emotional and behavioural needs.

The system for educating gifted and talented students in New Zealand is based on the document 'Gifted and Talented Students – Meeting their Needs' (2012). The national education standards in the country recommend that the system support all students to realise their potential, identify and remove barriers to success, and identify and support students with special needs (ibid.). National administrative guidelines provide for all schools to identify gifted and talented students and implement appropriate teaching and learning strategies for those students (ibid., p. 4). Schools have autonomy in selecting the curriculum model, with the most prominent being: Renzulli's triad model of giftedness, Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent and Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Model. Individualized educational plans are an expression of what the student already knows they have to learn and what differentiated activities they will be provided with (ibid., p. 4).

The New Zealand concept of educating gifted and talented students rests on the following principles: integration (education of gifted and talented students is an integral part of the education system), professional capacity (the education of gifted and talented students is supported by highly qualified teachers who undergo continuous education and training and are developed from this field), due regard to cultural diversity (in identification and programming), high expectations, learning to learn, inclusion, engagement, provability (approaches stem from relevant research and theories), responsiveness to difference, coherence and a focus on the future (Gifted and Talented Students – Meeting their Needs, 2012).

Freeman et al. (2010) found that schools measured the success of programmes for gifted students in different ways: 60% through student success, 33% through the number of students included in the programme, 29% through the progress made by students, 27% through parent satisfaction and 25% through student satisfaction. VanTassel-Baska (2006, p. 199) points out that programmes for gifted students are today faced with problems of credibility and a lack of political will to implement them. The problem of credibility arises because of the large number of concepts of giftedness and curriculum models, weak evaluative support and a lack of funds for educating gifted students at the national level (VanTassel-Baska 2006, p. 199).

1.3 Planning process

An effective programme for gifted students begins with careful and informed planning (Johnson, 1999) upon which implementation and evaluation are based. Different curriculum models provide for different planning phases.

The Total Talent Portfolio is a development document, with the planning process covering six stages. The first two stages are focused on informing students and parents of the principles and the process of the individualized programme. To the fore is the acquisition of status-related information on the student (prizes, achievements, competition results, student scorecards and the student's multiple intelligences profile), on the student's interests (inventory of interests, results of student observation, documentation on the formal or informal interview with the student and parents) and on learning styles (style of teaching, learning, thinking, expression and learning environment style) (Purcell and Renzulli, 1988). The third step is the collection of information by the teacher. In the fourth step, the content is organised and the role of the teacher is to prepare the framework, with guidelines for categorising products, while the student is responsible for setting their own criteria for assessing their own work and selecting the products. The fifth step is the individualized programme from various aspects, and the sixth step is establishment of the plan, programming and a decision on the educational programming.

The planning process for an advanced learning plan has seven stages (Writing Standards-aligned Advanced Learning Plans 2016, p. 12). These are: parents, relevant staff and the student are notified of the process of planning of the advanced programme; data is gathered and analysed; data is synthesised to determine present levels of academic achievement and a student learning target is established; the capabilities, confines, conditions and contexts of the system are considered; and annual measurable achievement and affective goals are developed (Writing Standards-aligned Advanced Learning Plans 2016, p. 12). Two types of individualized programme are prepared during the planning process: initial and annual (Writing Standards-aligned Advanced Learning Plans 2016, p. 3). The initial learning plan contains the following elements: information from the identification process, the student profile, the area of giftedness, the goals for achievement, the goals for affective development and evidence of parent engagement. The annual advanced education programme contains: student input, the synthesis of data, updating of the student profile, new goals for achievement, new goals for affective development and evidence of parent engagement.

The Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent provides for four stages of the individualized programmes process: meeting and setting of targets (review of successes, challenges); agreement and plan (agreement on responsibilities, on the plan and on how to achieve the targets, on actions and on the time frame); learning and teaching (development of learning and teaching targets); and review and report (evaluation in accordance with the targets) (Gifted and Talented Students – Meeting their Needs in New Zealand Schools, 2012).

1.4 Degree of engagement of students, parents and the school in the planning process

Engagement and participation with the aim of increasing educational opportunities for all students is one of the key principles of inclusive education (Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education, 2009, p. 9). Effective programmes for gifted students are based on family, school and community support, and formulated in such a way that they satisfy the individual needs of

the students and their family (Olszewski-Kubilius and Thomson, 2012, p. 402). An individualized education programme as a communication tool is aimed at bringing the student, teachers, the school and parents together to cooperate in effectively identifying and establishing the needs, interests and objectives of the gifted student (Rogers, 2002). The school, students and parents must work together as partners in the student's success, with clear expectations regarding the division of responsibilities and work and invitations to cooperate, and basic respect for the relationship (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2010).

The planning of individualized programmes for gifted students is an information and communication process that includes the acquisition and exchange of basic information on the student in order to obtain informed consent for inclusion and active participation from all those involved. The planning of an individualized programme is also a diagnostic process that encompasses the process of identifying the gifted student and obtaining relevant information via diagnostic instruments, procedures and discussions with parents, students and teachers. Advice covers all other advisory services that the gifted student and his/her parents require (doubly exceptional students, the social and emotional needs of gifted students). Planning is a process of work in which parents, the student and the school jointly create a programme for gifted students.

The planning of individualized programmes for gifted students is part of an education process in which the student actively participates in establishing their own needs, targets, aspirations and activities, thereby strengthening their own abilities to manage their own education and take responsibility for the quality and implementation of the individualized education programme. This means that the student has a major role in establishing the targets and determining the content and the activities.

Implementation of the Total Talent Portfolio has benefits for the student, the teacher and the community/school. From the point of view of the student, it promotes their ownership of learning experiences and their personal development. This identification of interests clarifies learning and promotes self-directed learning (Challenge for Excellence: Total Talent Portfolio, 2006). From the point of view of the teacher, it is important for deepening the understanding of the student's profile, identifying additional learning content for support in achievements and academic results, expanding the learning and assessment repertoire, strengthening the teacher-student relationship, and creating the possibility of meeting a variety of educational needs (Challenge for Excellence: Total Talent Portfolio, 2006). From the point of view of the school, the planning of the Total Talent Portfolio is important for promoting a culture of high achievement, supporting school improvements in planning opportunities, encouraging students to be more active, and achieving and developing an effective curriculum that promotes an active role on the part of the student in programming their own education (*ibid.*). The student has an active role and is a researcher and problem-solver (Tugrul and Alkan, 2012, p. 4,162). The teacher's role is as a planner, organiser, trainer and resource manager (Tugrul and Alkan, 2012, p. 4,162).

Together with the student, the teacher reviews the portfolio. The student presents his/her criteria for selecting a product and learning experience, and they discuss the educational options. Team meetings and discussions with parents and students are important in the planning of individualized programmes.

An Advanced Learning Plan is a planning document maintained by the student and reflects the current level of implementation, the envisaged curricular programme, the student's targets, parent engagement, student engagement, the timeline, and the monitoring and review process. Teachers, students and parents must act as partners in developing student outcomes with explicitly defined roles for a division of responsibilities that rests on a genuine invitation and basic mutual respect (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2010). An Advanced Learning Plan is a tool for communication between students, parents and teachers, and requires engagement and communication (Gifted and Talented Students – Meeting their Needs in New Zealand Schools, 2012, p. 64).

An Advanced Learning Plan is derived from the Autonomous Learner model, where the student plays an active role in both planning and further research (Tugrul and Alkan, 2012, p. 4,162). The teacher is an integrator, adviser and the one who provides resources (Tugrul and Alkan, 2012, p. 4162).

The involvement of teachers, curriculum specialists, parents and, in particular, students ensures that the plan meets the unique cognitive and affective needs of gifted students (ibid.).

Where students have been actively involved in setting their own targets, student participation has been shown to be higher, as has the quality of the contents in the individualized programme (Konrad Trela& Test, 2006). Despite the fact that the student is to the fore, the level of family engagement also increases (Childre and Chambers, 2005), along with their support for implementation of the plan (Mason, Filed & Sawilowsky, 2004). From the point of view of individualized learning, individualized programmes for gifted students represent a space in which a teacher's professionalism in identifying a student's individual learning needs within a curriculum coincides with the student's ability to develop independent learning (PRAIN et al., 2013, p. 661).

When the planning is teacher-oriented, the entire discussion/conversation is usually lead by the teaching staff/teachers (Martin et al., 2006). Rogers and Amidon (2005, p. 8) find that 73.8% of parents stated that they were not involved in the process (or only when they signed the document), that they had not received all the information, and that they had not been apprised of the content of the individualized programmes for gifted students.

Gallagher (1995, p. 358) identify a lack of consistency and a crucial lack of involvement of parents in the process. A lack of formal education programmes for parents leads to problematic communication with parents (Van Tassel-Baska, 2006).

1.5 Planning of the document

The designations of individualized programmes differ. A variety of terms can be found in the literature: written educational programmes for gifted students, (Ohio), Advanced Learning Programme (Colorado), personal educational plan (Heartland), individualized programmes for gifted students (Slovenia), Total Talent Portfolio (Purcell & Renzulli, 1988), and Advanced Learning Plan (Nova Scotia).

An individualized education programme has several functions as a document in the education of gifted students: developmental, substantive, as an accompanying document, and

evaluative. The developmental orientation of individualized programmes is demonstrated by the fact that these programmes contain information from the identification process (the abilities, needs and interests of the student), as well as targets and the activities that will be supporting the achievement of those targets. Ongoing and final evaluation of an individualized programme is oriented towards identifying the progress and development of the student in pursuit of the target set.

The direction in terms of content is conditioned by the capacities of the school and student's system, and the extent to which the curriculum model is oriented towards an enrichment curriculum. Howley and Pendarvis (1986) define the process-oriented approach, where the individualized programme is oriented towards developing higher mental processes and fostering creative production among students. The content-oriented approach leans towards a specific substantive area, and the product-oriented approach is one in which the individualized programme is oriented towards results, achievements or products.

An individualized programme formulated on the basis of the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent is straightforward and provides for the following elements: a list of areas of giftedness, environmental factors, intrapersonal factors and desired competencies (talents) (Gagné, 2003). In setting the desired competencies, the decision taken by a student regarding the area in which he/she wishes to develop their competencies plays an important role. In defining the environmental factors, the factors that affect the development of competencies/talents, as well as those that present barriers to development, are to the fore. Intrapersonal factors encompass positive personal characteristics as well as weaknesses that could affect the development of the gifted student. Two areas are classed as natural abilities (gifts): mental abilities (intellectual, creative, social, perceptual) and physical abilities (muscular and motor control). Competencies or developed talents are: academic, technical, scientific/technological, artistic, social, administrative/market-related, business, games and sport (Gagné, 2003). This differentiation facilitates a definition to the effect that the development of a talent is the progressive transformation of exceptional natural abilities (gifts) into exceptional competence (talent) in a specific field. According to Gagné (2003), this can occur on condition that six elements are in place: an enriched curriculum/training programme, clear and challenging goals, selective access criteria, systematic and regular practice, regular and objective assessment of progress, and personalised accelerated pacing.

The planning of an Advanced Learning Plan takes place through the following stages: identification of an area of strength, the synthesis of data, the determination of students' needs, the selection of standards in line with students' needs, a determination of how the target is to be measured, and a record of the SMART target (Writing Standards-aligned Advanced Learning Plans (ALPs) (2016). It envisages at least two targets: one related to the academic area or the identified area of giftedness, and the other related to affective targets for social-emotional development or for career development. The learning strategies are defined in four areas. The first is content, containing the accelerated curriculum, the grade-level curriculum, online classes, the supplemental curriculum and college courses (*ibid.*). The second is process, which addresses acceleration, depth and complexity, extension, grouping, higher-order thinking, independent study, research and tiered instruction (*ibid.*). The third is product, which includes authentic audience, cross-curricular links, the demonstration of new knowledge, formative/summative assessment and real-world application. The fourth area is environment, involving the planning of centres, cluster groups, flexible groups, independence, whole-class work, resource rooms, online learning and concurrent enrolment (*ibid.*).

Renzulli's four-part theoretical model (Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness, Enrichment Triad Model, co-cognitive factors and executive functions) envisages the gathering of information within the Total Talent Portfolio for the purpose of deciding on individual programming for the gifted student. It works from the assumption that there are two types of giftedness: academic and creative production (Renzulli, 2016).

Aindividualized education programme is a high-quality instrument for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the programme and the student's progress. Rogers and Amidon (2005) stress that this is a living working document that is developed and, where necessary, revised. Directors and headteachers see individualized programmes as a paper-saving tool and propose the evaluation of four areas such as document format, the process of planning, the process of implementation and the effectiveness of the programme (ibid.). Programmes for gifted students must have clearly defined targets and specific results (VanTassel-Baska 2006, p. 200). An Advanced Learning Programme is also an evaluation document that measures a student's progress and engagement in the programme by including the indicator of success and self-efficacy.

Giangreco et al. (1994) find that the targets within aindividualized programme are more focused on the student's targets and on individual subjects. Lee-Traver (2006) finds that teachers see individualized programmes as a useful tool for the planning and implementation of targets for gifted students). Gallagher (1995, p. 358) find that individualized programmes are frequently treated as paper-based work, that this is a waste of teachers' time, that there is a lack of support and engagement from other teachers, and that aindividualized programme can lead to the curriculum becoming narrow and rigid. Lysenko (2002, p. 74) confirms that teachers have recognised the Total Talent Portfolio as a strong tool for understanding students' areas of strength and their needs. Smith and Simpson (1989) find that one of the key deficits of individualized education programmes is the inability of the multidisciplinary team to acquire the necessary information on a student. In an evaluation study, Rogers and Amidon (2005, p. 8) find that teachers fear additional administrative work, that they are insufficiently trained and lack support in the education of gifted students, and that there is a lack of time and money.

2 Definition of the criteria and issues pertaining to the high-quality planning of individualized programmes for gifted students

The following areas pertaining to the planning of individualized programmes have been defined on the basis of a review of the research and a qualitative analysis of three different cases of individualized programmes for gifted students: the placement of individualized programmes into school practice; the purpose and objectives of individualized programmes; selection of the concept of giftedness and the curriculum model; the planning process; the engagement of students, parents and the school; and the planning of the document. The key challenges and issues relating to high-quality planning are defined in the table below.

Table 1:

Area of planning	Challenges	Issues
Placement of individualized programmes for gifted students in the school system	School legislation	Does the school system provide for individualized programmes? Does school legislation support the implementation of individualized programmes?

	Capacities of the school system	<p>Do the capacities of the school system enable individualized programmes to be planned and implemented?</p> <p>Do the capacities of the school system enable learning to be individualized and do they enable enrichment programmes and other activities for gifted students?</p> <p>Are individualized programmes for gifted students aimed solely at those identified as gifted, or at all students?</p>
Purpose and objectives of aindividualized programme	Vision	What is the school's vision regarding the purpose and objectives of individualized programmes?
	Purpose	Why would individualized programmes be planned?
	Objectives	<p>What objectives would be achieved by planning individualized programmes?</p> <p>What is the objective of planning individualized programmes?</p>
Selection of the concept of giftedness and the curriculum model	Definition of giftedness	<p>Does the definition of giftedness support the school legislation in the area of educating gifted students?</p> <p>Does the definition of giftedness support individualized programmes for gifted students?</p> <p>Is the definition of giftedness multi-dimensional and does it include a greater number of students with different abilities, skills and interests?</p>
	Curricular adjustments	Does the curriculum model support curricular adjustments in line with the capacities of the school system and the purpose of aindividualized programme?
Process of planning aindividualized programme for gifted students	Stage of process	<p>Have the stages of the planning process for the individualized programme been realistically set in relation to school legislation in the area of the education of gifted students?</p> <p>Is the strengthening of the capacities of the school system (e.g. training of students, parents and teachers) envisaged for the planning of the individualized programme for gifted students?</p> <p>What are the stages of the planning process?</p>
Engagement of students, parents and teachers	Student	<p>What is the role of the student in identifying his/her own educational needs and planning his/her educational targets?</p> <p>What is the role of the student in identifying their own capacities and the capacities of the school system to implement aindividualized programme for gifted students?</p>
	Parents	<p>What is the role of parents in identifying students' educational needs and planning their educational targets?</p> <p>What is the role of parents in identifying their family's capacity to implement aindividualized programme for a gifted student?</p>

	Teachers/school	<p>What is the role of the school in identifying students' educational needs and planning their educational targets?</p> <p>What is the role of the school in identifying its capacity to implement an individualized programme for a gifted student?</p>
Planning of the document	Developmental orientation	<p>Is the document oriented towards development? Is the identification of educational needs in the planning process the final word or only an initial identification of educational needs?</p> <p>What are the planned targets? Are the targets realistic and measurable? Are the targets abstract?</p> <p>Are the targets oriented towards development? Are the targets aimed at teachers or students?</p> <p>Are the targets aligned with the concept of giftedness and the curriculum model?</p> <p>Are the targets process-based, substantive and oriented towards product?</p>
	Substantive document	<p>Does the document contain all elements of a high-quality individualized programme for gifted students?</p> <p>Has the planning of an individualized programme for gifted students been coordinated with the planning of the ordinary curriculum?</p>
	Accompanying and evaluation document	<p>Are criteria planned for monitoring and evaluation? Which criteria are planned (time, products, achievements, etc.)?</p>

Individualized programmes for gifted students derive from a variety of concepts of giftedness and curriculum models. The selection of the curriculum model must be aligned with the school legislation and the capacities of the school system to implement individualized programmes for gifted students. An inclusive school envisages the education of gifted students as part of an integrated system of education for all students, while the process of identifying giftedness is oriented towards identifying the educational needs of students. Individualized programmes for gifted students planned in this way are one of the ways in which learning can be individualized. Here, the capacity of the system to plan and implement individualized programmes is key. Opinions on the capacities and limitations of the school and the student's system, on the conditions for implementation and on context are therefore compiled during the process of planning an Advanced Learning Programme. The opinion on capacities encompass the student's potential, the teacher's ability to implement the curriculum at a higher level, the curricular options for advanced learning, the teaching materials options, the capacities of the teaching staff and the educational options available within the community. The opinion on limitations contains information on teachers' competencies, the upgrading of teaching materials, the alignment of the Advanced Learning Programme with the school legislation, the sources of funding and the time available for implementation. The opinion on conditions addresses the grade level, small groups, flexible groups, cluster groups, discussion groups and additional services for gifted students. The opinion on context contains pedagogical strategies such as project learning, acceleration, additional curriculum, multi-level learning, mentorship, independent learning, online learning and cooperative learning.

The aims and objectives of individualized programmes for gifted students vary. Some of them are oriented towards a holistic approach, while others are oriented solely towards developing identified areas of strength. All three individualized programmes presented are based on a multi-dimensional approach that includes different interests, abilities and skills (Renzulli, 2016). The Total Talent Portfolio includes all students and various types of interest, ability and skill. The Advanced Learning Programme envisages at least two targets: the identified area of giftedness and the affective target. An individualized programme under the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (Gagné) has, as its target, the development of giftedness into talent.

The planning of individualized programmes encompasses different planning stages. Planning commences with the provision of information to students, parents and teachers on the process of planning the individualized programme, the acquisition of information on the student and the planning of the document.

The level of engagement and cooperation on the part of the students, parents and teachers contributes to the high-quality planning of an individualized programme. There are different approaches that also depend on the culture of the school and the curriculum model selected. The quality of the planned individualized programmes is an indicator of inclusion. This means that it is integrated with and complements the ordinary education programme. An individualized programme is target-based and oriented towards development, and constitutes an important criterion for monitoring and evaluation.

Conclusion

A large number of factors influence the planning of individualized programmes, which means it would not be appropriate to rank them in order of quality on the basis of a comparative analysis and assessment. The diversity of school systems, school legislation and practical approaches between different countries demonstrate quality precisely in their diversity. This diversity must be respected in any future interpretations. An overview of the challenges faced in planning produces points of departure that are useful for school practice in relation to the placement and planning of individualized programmes, as well as to the evaluation of the planning process. The points of departure shown constitute a set of guidelines for future scientific research and an evaluation of individualized programmes for gifted students.

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