"Creating Policies to Support Twice-Exceptional Students in Saudi Arabia"
Ms. Amra Mohammed, University of Jeddah
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A little explanation about this service.

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Elektra Panthar
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(NOTE: The above did not appear in this particular presentation's transcript, but is attached as an explanation about the transcription process)

[2018/10/06 14:00] cassandra (cassandra1699): Welcome everyone!
I have had a spinal problem since childhood, and used rehabilitation services to complete college, since then I have always believed it was my duty to give back to the community whenever possible.
I am currently a family therapist in an office that specializes in persons who have disabilities.
I love Second Life. It allows me to express creativity in ways I otherwise couldn't, and to interact with people all over the world.

Now I would like to introduce......... Amra Mohammed.
Ms. Amra Mohammed is a Lecturer in the department of Special/Gifted Education at the University of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (KSA). She is currently completing the doctoral program in Special/Gifted Education at the University of Northern Colorado.
Ms. Mohammed served as program coordinator and teacher for the Summer Enrichment Program at the University of Northern Colorado in Summer 2017, and she is currently developing a similar program for Jeddah University.
Her professional area of specialization is twice-exceptionality (2E), students who are identified with two different disabilities.
She is passionate about applied research in this area and enjoys working with teachers and parents of twice-exceptional students.

She will review the history of special education in the United States and Saudi Arabia (KSA). She will briefly review the Twice-Exceptionality issue.
Then she will propose a recommended framework, procedures, and timeframe for developing a policy for 2E students in the KSA.
The recommended process follows definitions, identification procedures, and interventions for 2E established so far in the United States. Each step includes input and action from multiple stakeholders with proper expertise, authority, and experience.
Input from multiple sources will allow the successful adaptation of US-based information for use in the KSA. Furthermore, the recommendations she makes are based on careful consideration of the critical role that policy intermediaries play in implementing educational policies.

I would like to request that you hold questions and comments for Ms Mohammed until the end, because...well we are polite avatars.
Welcome Ms Mohammed and now we are delighted to hear from you!

[2018/10/06 14:02] Elektra Panthar: The following initials in the transcription record will identify the speaker:
AM = Amra Mohammed
<>

[2018/10/06 14:07] Elektra Panthar: AM: Hello everyone, thank you Cassandra for introducing me, and thank you everyone for attending this presentation and thank you Gentle for giving me this chance
I'll start by telling you about my experience with 2E students
A short intro about who these students are, about their life
If you are a teacher, think about a student, or about someone you know who is clever in one area but has poor performances in another area
Based on some criteria, this student is considered as 2E
Basic definition for 2E is to be gifted and have a disability at the same time.
However, there are many kinds of both giftedness and disabilities

In 2014 the national 2E community of practice defined these students
There wasn't an accurate definition before then
3 main concerns in this definition
1. disability and giftedness at the same time
2. there's a masking issue
3. accurate programs, services and support

There should be a good relationship between student, teachers and families
They have to have a legal / special role that guarantees they are provided this service
As said before, there many kinds of disabilities, and can combine with any kind of giftedness
This is one example of a 2E student
They may be a class clown or not behave appropriately, or there may be a discrepancy in achievement and their abilities

Some are natural leaders, or verbally gifted, but poor writing and spelling skills
There might be asynchronous development: large gap between strengths and weaknesses
Because this is a complex situation, there are 3 kinds of 2E students

This is the masking issue
- their giftedness may mask their disability (high creativity hiding poor spelling issues)
- their disabilities hide their giftedness (student with ADHD that are disruptive but are very skilled in reading /writing)
- their disabilities and giftedness mask each other (they look average)

The first group are referred to special programs, instead the second groups receive services for their disabilities but not for their giftedness
The third group doesn't receive any service

The most challenging aspect is identifying these students
In my experience most teachers don't know about 2E students
The schools doesn't identify them accurately, so there's no official identification for these students and the teachers lack training and there is no specific curriculum or program for these students
This also affects social and emotional aspect of these students' life
This issue becomes more complicated when the student has financial problems or is part of a minority
It's important to know that these 2E students are found in every part of society and are present in most classrooms
The problem arises when their strengths are translated into challenging behavior when not addressed properly
There could be a clear definition of what they are, what do they need, and identify the masking issues
Identification needs to take into consideration both giftedness ad disabilities

They need to have a goal within their program of support for these students - this should include teacher training as well
The main strategies to serve these students:
Collaborations between general education teachers and special education teachers and gifted education teachers
Defining area of needs
Connecting and analyzing data for each student
Identification should be specific for each student - there are no two students alike
Educational environment, education plan, student history, their strengths and weaknesses as well as preferences should all be taken into consideration
This is why all the mentioned teachers need to cooperate, as well as administrators, and of course families, together with support people like psychologists if present, and also classmates
This is to better understand and get to know the 2E student
Most research show that it's important to look at the giftedness first, and then to the disabilities
This builds a good self confidence and self esteem in the students and helps them overcome their difficulties

Once all the data is collected, there needs to be a review procedure, a communication procedure, criteria for determining potential
It's important to have a specific benchmark
The student profile needs to take into consideration their achievements and their performance, but also their behavior and their intellectual abilities

An important strategy in identifying these students is the dual emphasis approach
Another one is the whole child approach and as I said, the strength based approach
It's important to remember each 2E student needs to have an individualized plan
It's important to build self confidence never to take away time from their strengths to work on their weaknesses
As with gifted programs, the 2E student programs need to focus on several activities
Compacting
Differentiation
Choice Menus
Learning Contracts
"Most Difficult First"
Encourage high level abstract thought, creativity, and problem solving
There is a very clear legislation about gifted students in KSA - there are also clearly established organizations
The challenge is that there is no specific legislation about 2E students
Teachers don't know how to identify and help 2E students
In a proposal for the government I have a plan to implement a tool in student legislation
They have to find a clear definition of what these students are
Maybe we could adopt the 2014 definition
We have to analyze existing situations, generate a policy to identify the students
The minister of education needs to be the one to implement this policy in all schools
The ministry of education needs to include into this implementation programs like training for teachers
This could take up to one year to implement - afterwards there needs to be an assessment about the result of the program.
Do you have any questions ?

[2018/10/06 14:52] Gentle Heron: Thank you Amra. You gave us a lot of information in a well organized manner.
QUESTION: What is the difference between 2E students and "gifted underachievers"?
[2018/10/06 14:53] Elektra Panthar: AM: We have to differentiate between these two groups
The underachieving aspect of the GU student doesn't depend on a disability, but on their environment or financial situation, or lack of support

[2018/10/06 14:55] Gentle Heron: [14:54] Youri Ashton: COMMENT/OFFER: First of all I would like to thank you for your time and effort in this field and your time presenting this to us. As being autistic myself (Asperger Syndrome and ADHD) I see a lot of important information is missing or only tell half of the story. I managed to teach myself a lot more then school ever managed to do, even to the level of being

able to help people in many fields including behind the scenes of this very digital world and disability aid. I would like to offer my help in trying to help out where I can, it would be a lot more helpful to you and those that need to benefit from this if someone with personal experience could help out.

[2018/10/06 14:57] Elektra Panthar: AM: If they need more information I can provide them, I didn't have time to illustrate it all in this presentation

[2018/10/06 14:57] Youri Ashton: oh I don't need more information myself, I would like to offer to you because I know it's so limited in your country

[2018/10/06 14:57] Elektra Panthar: AM: I appreciate it Youri!

[2018/10/06 14:57] Gentle Heron: [14:54] Mook Wheeler: OBSERVATION & QUESTION: I'm interested in your point that research shows supportive procedures seek to emphasise the strengths/'giftedness' first, and not the disability, to draw out the best in the student. It certainly sounds good. However, what is the procedure in the case of, for example, an autistic individual whose 'giftedness' also happens to be their disability? The line between 'focus on what they can do' and 'focus on what they can't do' may not be so clear in certain conditions and disorders, and breaking down a disability into component parts in order to locate or 'extract' the giftedness, may be problematic because it focuses on identifying dissected facets rather than supporting the whole.

[2018/10/06 15:00] Elektra Panthar: AM: When I said focus on their giftedness, there needs to be a program to deal in equal parts with both gift and disability
For example there needs to be accommodation for the areas where the student has difficulty
The important aspect is not to ignore either aspect
((Thank you :)))

[2018/10/06 15:00] Youri Ashton: oh perfectly understand what Amra is telling us, but that is not what Mook is trying to say
Every case is different, your idea is great but it misses a lot of important aspects
For which I offered my help
The exact same thing may be different per case

[2018/10/06 15:00] Mook Wheeler: yes one sec typing
For example: sometimes the same thing in an autistic person, say the ability to be extremely detailed/pedantic, may also be considered a disabling tendency as it alienates social contact

[2018/10/06 15:02] Dorie Bernstein chuckles in agreement

[2018/10/06 15:03] Mook Wheeler: Exact same thing can be both 'gift' and 'disability'
Sometimes you cannot 'draw a line' between the two

[2018/10/06 15:03] Gentle Heron: [14:57] Slatan Dryke: Question maybe off topic: is 2E definition about disabled/gifted children related to the old poor one that was calling them as "Idiot Savant" aka Savant Syndrome Bearers ?

[2018/10/06 15:03] Elektra Panthar: AM: I'm not familiar with the Waldorf model, I need to read more about it
I don't think so

[2018/10/06 15:04] Youri Ashton: You are perfectly on the right path, but as I mentioned in my original comment I would like to help you in getting the missing information which may proof very important to your work

[2018/10/06 15:04] Gentle Heron: [14:54] Letty Luckstone: Student identification at an early age is critical, especially if later, students decide to attend university. Because 2E students may mask one or both of their exceptionalities, they may miss out on services that could be provided at university. Students with disabilities often hide them at that level by choice. Have you considered extending your research (after you earn your PhD, that is) to follow children longitudinally to college? If perhaps, the culture of the school inadvertently encourages masking that may disadvantage them?

[2018/10/06 15:05] Youri Ashton: oh very spot on Letty!

[2018/10/06 15:05] Elektra Panthar: AM: This is very important and she is right
This masking issue, at a young age it's not a big problem but as the tasks become more complicated they struggle more and more

[2018/10/06 15:06] Gentle Heron: [15:03] iSkye Silverweb: One of my big concerns with programs for 2E gifted kids is program continuity. I was placed in a such a program when I was 8 years old until I was 10 when funding ran out. At the time my parents told me I'd "graduated" from the program and so was mainstreamed, but years later I learned the program ran out of money. It wasn't easy when I was mainstreamed so that's a concern I have. Funding runs out and the kids lose the support they need.

[2018/10/06 15:07] Elektra Panthar: AM: This is one of the issues - the programs not receiving enough funding
They need to submit a quest for funding for gifted education to federal government

[2018/10/06 15:08] Shyla the Super Gecko (krijon): Not sure this is a priority for funding under the current administration...

[2018/10/06 15:08] Gentle Heron: How well will your proposed policies be received by regular classroom teachers in KSA? Many special education proposals sound good on paper but fall apart when classroom teachers are not able, for whatever reason, to implement them.

[2018/10/06 15:09] Elektra Panthar: AM: we have a centralized system so the ministry is responsible for all school districts
If we could deliver the idea to the ministry and they take steps into implementing it, it can be applicable to all districts
In KSA they can have appropriate funding - of course it's easier in writing but it could be done if the ministry takes that first step

[2018/10/06 15:12] AmraMohammed: moha6309@bears.unco.edu
[2018/10/06 15:13] AmraMohammed: Thank you
Thank you all. I really appreciate your attendance