

# **A Study on the Enrichment Practice Accompanied by Supportive Counselling for a Gifted Student**

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## **Abstract**

The objective of this research is to examine whether or not the enrichment practice accompanied by supportive counselling in education has a positive effect on a gifted student's problematic behaviours, current state and attitudes towards setting and reaching a target. This research is based on single subject research model, and the ABAB model has been chosen as a method among all single subject research designs. The research has revealed that the enrichment practice accompanied by supportive counselling positively affects a gifted student's problematic behaviours, skills of setting, reaching a target, academic success and interest in school.

**Keywords:** gifted education, enrichment, counselling

## **Introduction**

The fundamental function of education is to equip individuals with functional skills and improve their existing skills. This requires special individual practices. However, the need to provide individuals with shared features, which results from the common education standards, as well as the desire to expand educational services in the society pave the way for learning practices directed at large groups. In such a situation, special needs that arise from individual talents cannot be fulfilled (D.T.K pre-report, 2004). Neither familial nor social life gives the support gifted students need in relation with their own characteristics. Researchers have shown that many gifted students who cannot get individual support are indifferent to the education programs they are offered to, the knowledge level they reach falls behind their potential and they have adaptation problems at school and in daily life (Ataman,1998; Barnette, 1989; Betts, 1986; Gross, 1989; Levine & Tucker, 1986; Mallis, 1983; Myers & Pace, 1986; Webbet al.), Mecjsroth & Tolan, 1982). Unexpected failure, reluctance to attend classes, the feeling of boredom and de-socialisation are frequent problems that result from the above mentioned factors (Ataman,1998, Emerick,2004; Lovecky,1993).

McCoach and Siegle (2003) have found that the successful gifted students and the gifted students who unexpectedly fail differ in motivation, self-control, setting target and attitudes towards school. In fact, these problems are closely related and feed each other. If a student sets a target but fails to develop him/herself in line with this target, this has an adverse effect on his/her success performance. A student whose success performance is negatively affected and who believes that the school is not competent enough to support his interests or meet his

educational needs takes a dislike to school. Such alienation is also reflected on his/her relations with his/her friends. The student who does not put efforts for a certain goal or determine a road map for him/herself starts to get bored and tries to find a way out as he thinks that life is boring (Porter, 1999; Ataman, 1998; Smutny, 2001).

Yoo and Moon (2006) have conducted a research on the requirements and problems of gifted students and concluded that both preadolescents and adolescents need support in education planning. Many researches show that enrichment practices done in accordance with gifted students' interests and skills as well as counselling services rendered to these students and their families might prevent the problematic behaviours mentioned above (Milgram, 1991; Myers & Pace, 1986; Mendaglio & Peterson, 2007; Lovecky, 1993, Zuccone & Amerikaner, 1986.) Given this, it is thought that education enrichment practices along with supportive counselling might help gifted students make a social, emotional and educational progress. Based on this, the objective of this study is to find out if enrichment practices accompanied by supportive counselling have a positive effect on the problematic behaviours, current state and attitudes towards setting and reaching a goal of a gifted student who is said to need counselling.

## **Method**

In this research, it is examined whether or not enrichment practices accompanied by supportive counselling have a positive effect on the problematic behaviours, current state and attitudes towards setting and reaching a goal of a gifted student.

**Research Model:** Single-subject research methods are empirical models that are getting more and more supporters and being more and more popular day by day (Iftar & Tekin, 1997, Wiersma, 1995). Simonsen and Little (2011) emphasize that it is appropriate to apply single-subject research methods in researches on gifted people, and state that such methods will contribute to the field. In this research, ABAB, which is one of the single subject research designs, is used. This model is recommended as one of the proper models for the researches on gifted students (Simonsen & Little, 2011). In this model A refers to starting level, B refers to the implementation of independent variable. The second AB refers to the repetition of a similar stage (Wiersma, 1995).

**Participant:** The participant of the research is a 12-year old gifted student who is from a high socio-economic level and attends a private primary school. He is the second and youngest child of a well-educated family. He gets an education with other students, who are not gifted, in a school where general education is given. He has never been subject to a separation or enrichment practice.

**Practice:** The student's mother mentioned the following problems: He constantly makes up pretexts in order not to go to school. He says he no longer wants to attend classes. His

academic success declines. He always reads adventure novels complaining that life is boring. He starts to alienate himself from real life. She, thus, asked for counselling.

The researcher had an interview with the mother. After that, s/he met the student and tried to understand the possible reasons for his problems. After two sessions with the student, he indicated that he thinks there is no clear target that would satisfy him in his life, this ambiguity upsets him and makes his life meaningless, he finds the sports activities that his family insistently encourages him to join to get him to socialize nonsense and a waste of time, he thus refuses to participate in such activities, he regards school as a boring place that would make no contribution to his life, he tries to get rid of this boredom by reading adventure novels, he would like to have a life which is as full as these adventure novels, but he thinks life is so monotonous and depressing. In the second session, the student mentioned that he is interested in physics and would like to do something in this field. He added that his family lacks sufficient knowledge to support him and the lessons at school fall far behind his needs.

As a consequence of the interviews with the student and his mother, the researcher concluded that the student needs to set targets in line with his field of interest and also needs enrichment practices to reach these targets. In this direction, a meeting was held with the mother and it was ensured that the student gets support in physics, which he is interested in. A master's degree student came to the student's house for two hours –in a day- once a week. In this way enrichment practice was implemented. The subject matters to be included within the enrichment practice were determined with the student himself. The targets were set and the efficiency of the practice was evaluated.

The role of the researcher in this research is to have weekly interviews with the student, mother and teacher, guide them in practice and evaluate the effectiveness of the enrichment practice. The interviews were held face to face and one to one.

**Data Gathering Tools:** The researcher had separate interviews with the mother and student twice. At the end of these four interviews, he obtained overlapping and coherent data. He developed problematic behaviour form, current state form, target setting form and evaluation form for reaching targets. While these tools were being developed, the related literature was reviewed, the problematic situations and the situations and skills that may require support were examined and criteria tools were designated considering the data that match with the student. The forms were filled in by the mother. The data completely complied with the sessions held with the mother and student.

**Enrichment practice accompanied by supportive counselling:** The forms were filled in by the mother. The starter level of the enrichment practice was determined considering the sessions held with the mother and student himself as well as the forms.

Before the enrichment practice was done, "astronomy" was selected as a subject matter. The student mentioned that he would like to do a research on the subject matter and have in-depth information. He also said that his plan is to open a website at the end of the education process.

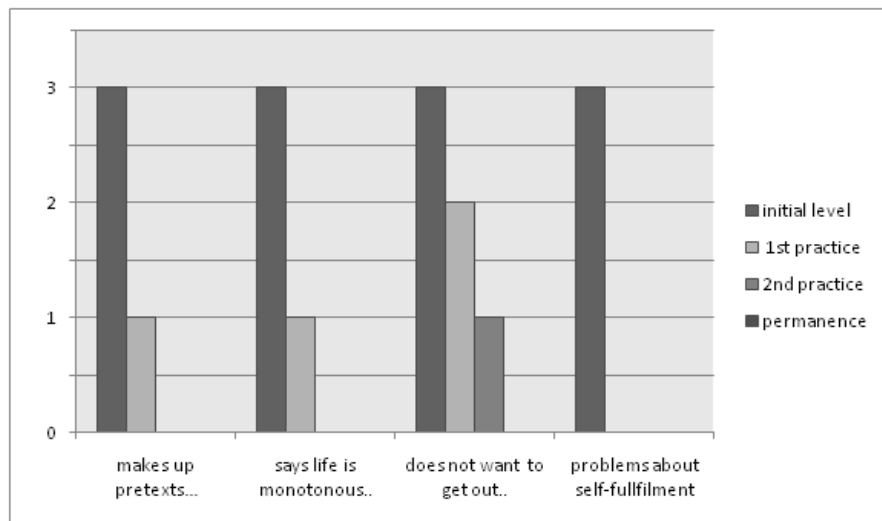
The teacher, student and researcher got together and determined the content of education together. Given the content, it was decided to continue the education for five weeks. At the end of these five weeks, the mother filled in the problematic behaviour form, current state form, target setting form and evaluation form for reaching targets. It was observed in the sessions held with the student, mother and teacher that the student was content with the enrichment practice, put efforts and wanted to continue. For the next education process, “generating electricity with alternative ways” was determined as the subject matter in accordance with the student’s wish. The student said that he wants to come up with a product at the end of this education process and his plan is to participate in an inter-school competition. The content of the education was determined, and it was decided to hold the education for seven weeks. At the end of the education, the forms were filled in and individual interviews were held with the mother, teacher and student. After the education ended, the summer holiday started. After the summer holiday ended and two weeks after the beginning of academic year, the researcher held an interview with the mother and student to evaluate how permanent the influence of the practice was. He evaluated the existing state then, and the forms were used also in this session.

## **Results**

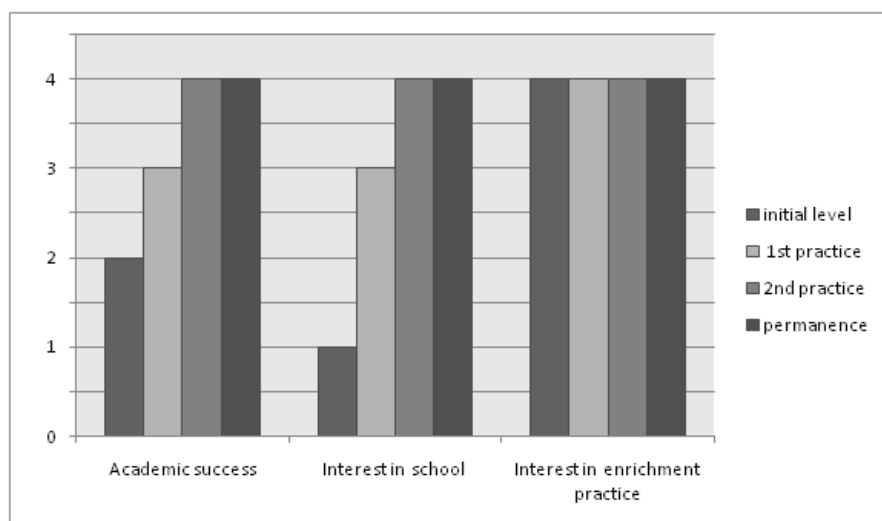
When we examined the effect of enrichment practice accompanied by supportive counselling on a gifted student’s problematic behaviours, we observed that enrichment practice caused a decline in such behaviours and this downwards trend then became permanent. (See Graphic1). While the student was continuously making up pretexts to miss classes and constantly complained about the life being monotonous and boring at the beginning, he rarely did so at the end of the first session. Such behaviours completely ended at the end of the second practice. The student initially insisted on reading adventure novels and rejected all other activities all the time, but at the end of the first session such behaviours were rarely observed. At the end of the second session, these behaviours were not observed at all. When we took a look at the permanence effect of the practice, we observed that the student’s problematic behaviours permanently ended after a certain period of time. His problem about self-fulfilment was a continuous problem at the beginning. However, at the end of the first session it faded away and was no longer observed (See Graphic1).

When we examine the effect of the practice on the current state, we see that the student’s academic success was at medium level at the beginning but it was improved by one level (good) at the end of the first session as it can be seen in Graphic 2. At the end of the second practice, his academic success became very good and this state is still permanent. The student’s interest in school was weak at the beginning. At the end of the first practice, his interest in school became “good” and at the end of the second practice it became “very good” and this state is still permanent. When we examine the student’s interest in the enrichment practice, we see that at the beginning he was keen on it. His interest remained during and after the practice (See Graphic 2).

**Graphic 1: The effect of the practice on problematic behaviours**

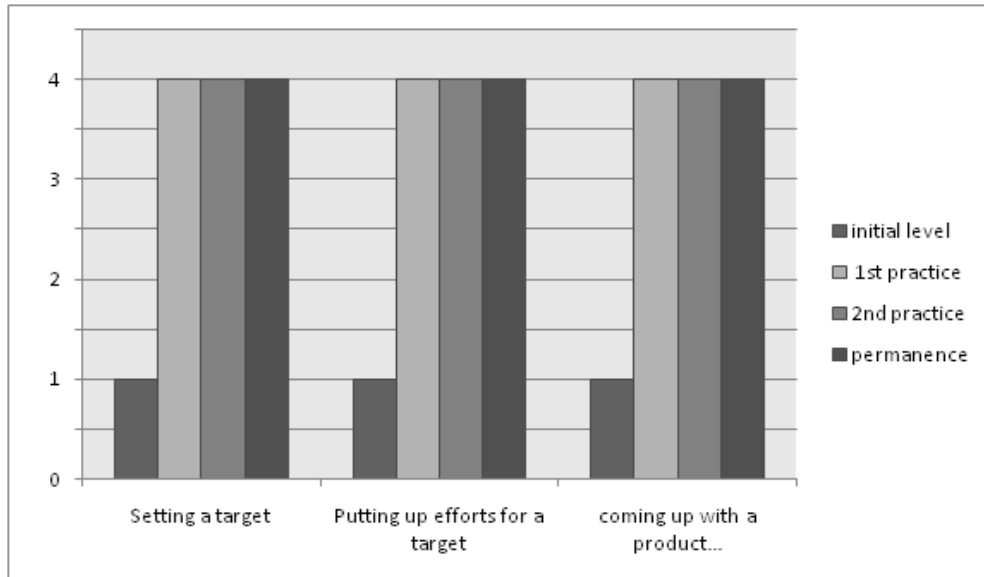


**Graphic 2: The effect of the practice on the current state**



When we examine the effect of the practice on the student’s setting and reaching a target, we see – as in Graphic 3- that at the beginning the student was weak in terms of setting a target, putting efforts and coming up with a product for this target. Yet, at the end of the first practice, he became “very good” and permanently continued this success.

**Graphic 3: Setting and reaching a target**



## Discussion

When we examine the effect of enrichment practice accompanied by supportive counselling on the gifted student's problematic behaviours, we observe that such behaviours faded away and permanently ended at the end of the practice. When we look at the effect of the practice on the student's academic success and interest in school, we see that there is a permanent improvement. As to his behaviours related to setting a target, putting efforts and coming up with a product for this target, there is also a permanent improvement.

Based on the interviews held with the mother and the student himself, it was thought that the reason for the student's problematic behaviour was that he thought he could not set a target for himself and realize his self-fulfilment. Thus, his life was adversely affected and he displayed problematic behaviours. It was assumed that enrichment practice accompanied by supportive counselling would help the student. The student's interest in the enrichment practice was quite high before, during and after the practice. Given this fact, it is thought that the student attaches importance to the practice and the practice satisfies him.

The student set his target at the beginning of the practice, he worked for his target and came up with a product. At the end of the first practice, he created a website on astronomy which provides astronomy-related information to his peers and students one or two years older than him. At the end of the second practice, the student developed a project in order to participate in a science contest between schools. He represented his school in this contest and ranked the third. The student exchanged views with his teachers and friends at school during the stages of creating a website and developing a project. Such an exchange of ideas helped him have positive attitude towards school. The student drew attention at school after his success in the

contest. He was appreciated by his teachers and friends. It is thought that this also paved the way for improvement in his problematic behaviours and helped the student's tendency to set new targets, putting efforts and coming up with products for these targets. This also colored the student's life and prevented his inclination to withdraw into his shell. After the summer holiday, a session was held to evaluate the permanency of the practice. It was learned that the student had already been selected by his teachers to represent his school in the nation-wide science Olympiads. Apart from this, the student now aims to participate in "Bu Benim Eserim", a national science competition with a project on "Developing a flying object based on liquid dynamics and Newton's 2<sup>nd</sup> Law". He has already started literature review to this end. He is now a student appreciated by his teachers and friends at school. He thinks that life is no longer boring, but very enjoyable. The enrichment practice met the student's need to go into more depth in his field of interest and positively affected his point of view about and approach to life.

Akar (2010) points out the importance of counselling and enrichment practices aimed at special academic needs as well as the significance of parents' training in the research he carried out with gifted students' teachers and parents. However, there is no research on the effect of individual counselling within enrichment practices on gifted students. This finding is also supported by Akar (2010). Yet, (Davis & Rimm, 2004) emphasize that enrichment practices accompanied by mentorship helps students develop themselves. Porter (1999) and Smutny (2001) point out that working with a person competent in the field of enrichment has positive effects on a gifted student. Hertzog (2004) states that the academic success of gifted students increases as a result of the differentiation practices done based on their response to education. Olenchak and Renzulli (2004) underline that enrichment practices positively affect gifted students' attitudes towards school and classmates as well as academic and social behaviours. The findings of this researches mentioned above match with the results of this study.

## **Conclusion**

The research reveals that enrichment practice accompanied by supportive counselling positively affects a gifted student's problematic behaviours, ability to set and reach a target, academic success and interest in school. Yet, since the research is single-subject, it is thought that it cannot be generalized for all gifted students and there is a need to carry out more researches in this field. Nevertheless, it is a fact that single subject researches carried out with gifted children enable us to learn more about these children's features and provide us with further information about them. Thus, it is believed that there is a need for a higher number of studies on individual counselling and enrichment practices, such researches would not only guide and support the researchers who would like to study in this field but also contribute to the field.

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