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## Review Article

### **Affective Curriculum for Gifted Students in Malaysia: A Recommendation**

**ABSTRACT:** In recent years, the Malaysian Ministry of Education has been reviving gifted and talented programmes. Gifted students are well-known for their academic achievements, but their socio-emotional development are often given less attention in schools. This article discusses the socio-emotional issues of gifted adolescents, and the needs for providing affective curriculum in gifted education to cater the socio-emotional needs of gifted adolescents. Various models for developing an affective curriculum are also discussed within the context of the Malaysian education system. Finally, this article considers the possible implications on teacher education and provides suggestions for future research to be conducted in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Gifted education, affective curriculum, socio-emotional development, Malaysia

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## INTRODUCTION

Although gifted education has a relatively brief history in Malaysia, there has been a revival of gifted education programmes by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in recent years. In 2009, the National University of Malaysia had launched the PERMATApintar Education Programme<sup>1</sup> and the School Holiday Camp<sup>2</sup> to identify and accommodate the learning needs of gifted and talented students from across the country (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, n.d.d). Furthermore, the recent *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025* released by the MOE had outlined long-term plans to provide support and implement gifted and talented programmes in Malaysia (Ministry of Education, 2013).

The field of gifted education has been generally prioritised on achieving academic excellence. However, the affective development – i.e. “the personal, social, and emotional aspects of learning” (Silverman, 1994a, p. 326) – of the gifted has been given relatively much less attention as compared to their cognitive development (Peterson, 2002; Silverman, 1994a). Furthermore, educators often perceive gifted students as not needing help and assumed that the gifted are able to apply their abilities to respond to their personal challenges (Peterson, 2002). According to Silverman (1994a), ignoring the emotional lives of the gifted can affect their intellectual lives and motivation – this is because the affective realm is not separate from the cognitive realm but rather, it interacts with each other and contributes to the learning and development of the gifted. Silverman (1994a, p. 327) adds that gifted students can become “anxious, depressed, alienated, socially inept, or emotionally blocked” when their emotional experiences are neglected by the emphasis on cognitive development in education.

Recent research on gifted students in Malaysia had highlighted the psychological and counselling issues of gifted students in gifted education programmes. Bakar and Ishak’s (2010) research revealed some of the counselling issues faced by Malaysian gifted students attending a school holiday programme, which includes ‘homesickness’, relationship issues with peers, anxiety, and having suicidal thoughts. In

addition, Ishak and Bakar (2010) found that low self-esteem, perfectionism, competitiveness, and anxiety are some of the psychological issues experienced by Malaysian gifted students in their research. Both studies concluded that Malaysian gifted students encounter similar socio-emotional issues as their peers globally (Bakar & Ishak, 2010; Ishak & Bakar, 2010). Therefore, it is equally important that the affective development of the gifted is also addressed within the curriculum. Since gifted students spend most of their time in school, it is imperative that the school’s environment and the curriculum are designed – especially in the Malaysian context – to minimise their socio-emotional issues and nurture their socio-emotional growth.

As the MOE is committing itself to build a better understanding of the needs of gifted children and promoting gifted education in Malaysia, this article calls for attention to the socio-emotional needs of gifted students, and highlights the various strategies available to develop an affective curriculum within gifted and talented programmes in Malaysia. First, the article discusses the theories used in understanding the characteristics and socio-emotional development of gifted individuals before focussing on the socio-emotional issues that are particularly experienced by gifted adolescents in school. The article also discusses the features and importance of providing an affective curriculum, as well as examining the various strategies and models that can be used in developing affective curriculum for gifted adolescents. The following section outlines the ways in which these strategies and models could be incorporated within the Malaysian education system. Finally, the article concludes by discussing the possible implications on teacher education and suggestions for future research within the field of gifted education in Malaysia.

### Social and Emotional Issues of Gifted Adolescents

Most studies on the psychosocial development of intellectually gifted students have reinforced the myth that gifted students are socially and emotionally well-adjusted (Clark, 2008; Gross, 2002). Robinson (2008, p. 34) states that gifted individuals are more mature socially than their age peers in terms of “friendship patterns, play interests, social knowledge and behaviour, and personality”. Hollingworth’s (1926, 1942, as cited in Gross, 2002, p. 21) research suggests that gifted individuals with IQ levels between 125 and 155 were “well-balanced, self-confident, outgoing,

<sup>1</sup> The PERMATApintar Education Programme is a two-year university preparatory programme which uses differentiated learning for students who have been identified as gifted (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, n.d.b).

<sup>2</sup> The School Holiday Camp is a series of science, technology and mathematics enrichment programmes for gifted and talented students from Year 3 to Form 3 (Ministry of Education, 2013).

and able to win the confidence and friendship of age peers". However, these findings cannot be generalised throughout the gifted population – Hollingworth also found that individuals who are profoundly gifted (with IQs above 160) experience various socio-emotional difficulties as other average-ability children are unable to relate to them and hence, it is difficult to form friendships with others (Gross, 2002).

Winner (1996) mentions that these socio-emotional issues occur because of the unique personality structure of the gifted, which set them apart from their average-ability peers. She proposed that there are three main characteristics that shape the distinctiveness of gifted individuals:

- a) *Work*: gifted children are highly motivated to work to achieve mastery; they derive pleasure from challenge, and at least by adolescence, they have an unusually strong sense of who they are and what they want to be as adults;
- b) *Value structures*: they are fiercely independent and nonconforming, as well as having advanced moral reasoning with zealous concerns about various ethical, moral, and political issues;
- c) *Relationship with peers*: they tend to be more introverted and lonelier than the average child, both because they have so little in common with others and because they need and want to be alone to develop their talent (Winner, 1996, p. 212)

These qualities create dual experiences within the gifted, which are not only "pleasurable and fulfilling" but it also can be "more painful, isolating, and stressful than of the average child" (Winner, 1996, p. 213). As Silverman (2000, p. 3) mentions, "gifted children not only think differently from their peers, they also feel differently". These internal experience and awareness become intensified with the asynchrony between their high cognitive ability and their average physical and emotional development, which further complicates their socio-emotional problems when they socialise with their age-peers (Silverman, 2000, 2002).

According to Cross (1997, as cited in Clark, 2008, p. 135), the social and emotional growth of the gifted relies on "how well the environment responds to and provides for their needs than to the different characteristics they present". Erikson's theory of psychosocial development is useful for highlighting the importance of satisfying the socio-emotional

needs of the gifted; this theory suggests that all individuals must progress through eight developmental stages from infancy to adulthood (Gillespie, 2009). In every developmental stage, it contains a crisis that needs to be resolved by the individual. The failure to successfully negotiate within the stages only creates a backlog of issues for the individual as they seek to establish their own social identity. As the environment influences the individuals' success in moving through these developmental stages, it is essential to provide a nurturing environment that serves the socio-emotional needs of the gifted to assist their social development and establish their social identity (Gillespie, 2009).

Gifted individuals also perceive themselves and their environment differently than others due to their high levels of intensity and sensitivity that affect their socio-emotional development. In Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration, the development of the gifted requires them to progress through "pentatonic levels [that] represent the mapping of human personality, or emotional development, along a continuum from low (egocentric) to high (altruistic)" by means of *positive disintegration* (O'Connor, 2002, p. 52; Robinson, 2008). Guiding this development process are the five overexcitabilities commonly found in gifted individuals i.e. *psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginal, and emotional*; both overexcitabilities and the positive disintegration process of socio-emotional development create a unique inner experience which marks the gifted as different from their peers (Silverman, 2000). Nevertheless, O'Connor (2002, pp. 55-56) highlights that these overexcitabilities could also be experienced in negative ways that result in the gifted "being misunderstood and alienated by those who do not share or understand their unique personality traits".

Research suggests that gifted individuals, who have attained advanced development, display high levels of emotional and intellectual overexcitabilities (Silverman, 2000; Tieso, 2009). Both of these overexcitabilities "make them more insightful and volatile in their relationships with peers and others", which could "result in discrepancy between how they perceive themselves and how they wish to be perceived" (Tieso, 2009, p. 663). In addition, the heightened sensitivity within the gifted often brings about moral concerns for ethical and political issues, as well as passion for social justice (VanTassel-Baska, 1998b). They are also empathetic and compassionate individuals who would dedicate themselves toward healing the world problems

(Clark, 2008; Silverman, 1994b, 1998, 2000). However, Silverman (1994b, p. 115) mentions that “the greater the asynchrony and moral sensitivity, the greater the vulnerability of the child within a morally insensitive society”. As suggested earlier, gifted students who tend to “exhibit intense sensitivity and internal responsiveness towards the actions of others” are likely to be socially rejected or ridiculed, which further leaves them feeling unaccepted by peers (VanTassel-Baska, 1998a, p. 492).

According to Silverman (1998), gifted children enter the adolescence stage in advance of their age-peers. This suggests that gifted adolescents would have to manage the various developmental issues – as illustrated earlier in Erikson’s psychosocial developmental theory – at an earlier age compared to others. According to Clark (2008), adolescents are overwhelmed by the physical and emotional changes that occur during this period of growth. Gifted adolescents do share similar personal goals with other adolescents: they seek for social acceptance; acknowledging their intellectual capacity and feeling the need to achieve academically; establishing their self-identity; and dealing with new responsibilities (Clark, 2008; Neihart & Huan, 2009; Silverman, 1998).

For some gifted adolescents, the desire to be socially accepted by their peers often pressures them to conform within the norms of the social group. Gifted boys find themselves having to either be athletically able or humorous in order for their academic success to be accepted, whereas gifted girls tend to hide their abilities and instead favour activities that are stereotypically feminine when seeking intimacy and acceptance among the female peer group (Clark, 2008; Silverman, 1998; Winner, 1996). Consequently, some gifted adolescents are willing to sacrifice their giftedness and hence underachieve in school for the sake of conformity and avoid being judged as a nerd or geek (Davis, Rimm, & Siegle, 2011). Furthermore, gifted adolescents from underrepresented groups, such as being twice-exceptional, non-heterosexual or from minority (sub) cultures, would experience further socio-emotional problems as they would find it more difficult to seek friendships (Peterson & Rischar, 2000; Reis & Renzulli, 2004; Winner, 1996).

Generally, gifted students hold strong academic self-concept but their social self-concept is often found to be poor (Davis, Rimm & Siegle, 2011; Neihart & Huan, 2009; Sampson & Chason, 2008). Self-concept is referred as “people’s perception of themselves that is

formed through life experiences” (Dixon & Kurpius, 2009, p. 4), whereby “the valuing of self is fundamental to human functioning” (VanTassel-Baska, 1998a, p. 490) in which one’s self-concept influences their capacity to succeed, self-esteem, motivation, and relationships with others. Unfortunately, studies found that gifted students’ self-concept tend to decrease from elementary to high school as they become increasingly anxious and isolated due to their asynchronies with their socio-emotional development and schooling environment (Robinson, 2008; Sampson & Chason, 2008). Gifted adolescents with poor self-concepts may not only underestimate their actual abilities and lower their self-esteem, but could also find problems with searching their own identity due to lack of social interactions (Davis, Rimm, & Siegle, 2011; VanTassel-Baska, 1998a).

Another common issue faced by gifted adolescents is perfectionism i.e. the dissatisfaction with the “difference between one’s ideal performance and one’s perception of his or her actual performance” (Coleman & Cross, 2000, p. 204). According to VanTassel-Baska (1998a, p. 493), gifted students have the tendency “for expecting more of themselves than is warranted given a particular set of circumstances”. Although perfectionism can be healthy as gifted students become highly motivated in working towards their self-targeted goals, an unhealthy preoccupation of achieving perfection with unrealistic high standards can interfere with their confidence and lead to frustration and perceived failure in themselves (Clark, 2008; Sampson & Chason, 2008). This is because gifted perfectionists feel “a conflict between internal drives for excellence and external pushes for performance” (VanTassel-Baska, 1998a, p. 493), which negatively impacts their decision-making skills as a result of being hyper-vigilant that lead only to ineffective search for alternative courses of action (Sampson & Chason, 2008). Besides that, this ‘neurotic perfectionism’ has harmful influences on gifted adolescents’ social relationship with others – their perfectionism isolates them from their peers due to perfectionistic work commitments, and also for their acceptance of only those whose abilities meet their high standards (Clark, 2008; Robinson, 2008).

As gifted students reach late adolescence, life decisions would have been made together with selections of college courses in preparation for their career (Silverman, 1998). However, some gifted adolescents need more time to decide their future pathway as their multi-potentiality

holds them back from making a firm decision (Owens, 2009). Kerr (1990, p. 1, as cited in Sampson & Chason, 2008, p. 334) describes multi-potentiality as “the ability to select and develop any number of career options because of a wide variety of interests, aptitudes, and abilities”. Gifted students with multi-potentiality find it difficult to narrow down the broad options available to them into a career choice, and this dilemma is even intensified with their perfectionism in looking for the perfect or ideal career (Colangelo, 2003). Hence, these perfectionism and multi-potentiality lead the gifted into a state of frustration, distress, and difficulty in “developing a sense of purpose because they cannot easily integrate or prioritize their abilities and talents” (Owens, 2009, p. 607; Sampson & Chason, 2008).

Studies have been conducted that highlights how gifted programmes can influence the socio-emotional well-being (or affective outcomes) of gifted students. In Plunkett and Kronborg's (2007) research, they found that the supportive and positive social and academic context created within the Extended Curriculum Program classes had satisfied the gifted girls' social and emotional needs, whereby they felt a strong sense of belonging among themselves with respects in each other's abilities. Findings from VanTassel-Baska, Feng, Swanson, Quek, and Chandler's (2009) research showed that the gifted programme had benefited gifted students from minority groups; it enhanced their self-confidence and developed higher level skills of communication and thinking. Besides that, Eddles-Hirsch, Vialle, Rogers, and McCormick's (2010) study on the impact of social context and challenging instruction on the affective development of high-ability students suggests that the type of extension programmes and gender culture of the school can influence the students' affective outcomes and how they engage in social coping strategies.

#### **Affective Curriculum in Gifted Education**

As feelings drive the thinking process, it is essential that gifted students' emotional state is focused as a motivational tool for enhancing learning, especially when they are exposed to various socio-emotional issues and risks as discussed earlier in this paper (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006). Mayer and Salovey (1997, p. 22) argue that the use of “emotions as one basis for thinking, and thinking with emotions themselves, may be related to important social competencies and adaptive behaviour”. Gifted students from minority groups, who may be socially marginalised in schools settings and

therefore limited in learning through social interactions, could learn to manage their socio-emotional issues through affective curriculum (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006). Silverman (1994a, p. 326) suggests that affective education is best emphasised during adolescence because their socio-emotional development and issues requires more attention rather than “the desire for mastery that characterised an earlier developmental period”.

According to Silverman (1994a, p. 328), it is important to distinguish between affective education and counselling to ensure that teachers would not “become overwhelmed by the responsibility of attending to the students' emotional needs”. In affective education, the activities are less personal than counselling and deal with emotional issues in less depth; students learn more and become aware of their personal beliefs and philosophies without necessarily changing them. A comprehensive affective programme should also provide opportunities for the gifted to discuss common concerns with other gifted students as they have different issues from their age-peers, and also because they would not feel comfortable revealing their problems in a mixed-ability group (Silverman, 1994a).

Nevertheless, the role of teachers should extend beyond merely educating gifted students; teachers of the gifted can also provide first-hand counselling service for students showing signs of early socio-emotional issues. According to Mayer and Salovey (1997, p. 19), “some of the most important learning takes place in the informal relationships” between the student and teacher. VanTassel-Baska and Baska (2000) suggest that teachers of the gifted are natural facilitators in addressing the gifted students' counselling needs as they are better trained than others in responding to the needs of gifted students who are already familiar to them. First, teachers need to “adopt a helping mind-set that requires a non-judgemental attitude, genuineness, focused attention, and the understanding that students need guidance to resolve their own issues” (Greene, 2005, p. 229). In addition, teachers should also adopt counselling skills such as active listening to explore, interpret and offer solutions to the situation presented by the students during class discussion (Green, 2005; Peterson, 2002; VanTassel-Baska & Baska, 2000).

The remaining section of this paper describes the various models that could be used to develop an affective curriculum for gifted adolescences in Malaysia. These models include

Krathwohl's Taxonomy of the Affective Domain; emotional intelligence; bibliotherapy; talent development plan; and career development programmes.

### ***Krathwohl's Taxonomy of the Affective Domain***

The Krathwohl's Taxonomy of the Affective Domain was produced as part of the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, which consists of three main components i.e. cognitive, affective, and psychomotor (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964). It addresses the affective domain of educational objectives that deals with interests, attitudes, values, appreciation, adjustment, and emotional sets or biases. Like Bloom's cognitive taxonomy that was first developed, the categories within the affective taxonomy are structured in a hierarchical order that are arranged along a continuum of internalisation from the lowest to the highest forms of affective manifestation. According to Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (1964, p. 44), the progression of internalisation entails the student "to attend to phenomena, to respond to them, to value them, and to conceptualise them" while organising his or her values in a value complex that characterises their way of life. The categories within the taxonomy of affective domain are listed as below:

- 1.0 Receiving (attending)
  - 1.1. Awareness
  - 1.2. Willingness to receive
  - 1.3. Controlled or selected attention
- 2.0 Responding
  - 2.1. Acquiescence in responding
  - 2.2. Willingness to respond
  - 2.3. Satisfaction in respond
- 3.0 Valuing
  - 3.1. Acceptance of a value
  - 3.2. Preference for a value
  - 3.3. Commitment (conviction)
- 4.0 Organisation
  - 4.1. Conceptualisation of a value
  - 4.2. Organisation of a value system
- 5.0 Characterisation of a value or value complex
  - 5.1. Generalised set
  - 5.2. Characterisation (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964, p. 95)

Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (1964, p. 62) suggest that both cognitive and affective taxonomies are closely interlinked – "each affective behaviour has a cognitive-behaviour counterpart of some kind and vice versa". Hence, the connections of each category

between both taxonomies can be applied in curriculum planning as an approach to integrate cognitive and affective behaviours (Silverman, 1994a), as shown below:

<b><i>Cognitive Taxonomy</i></b>	↔	<b><i>Affective Taxonomy</i></b>
Knowledge	↔	Receiving
Comprehension	↔	Responding
Application	↔	Valuing
Analysis	↔	Organisation
Synthesis	↔	Characterisation
Evaluation	↔	

(Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964, pp. 49-50)

These combinations do not always have to occur on the same level of the taxonomies – sometimes certain cognitive processes can benefit more through engaging with other levels of affective processes to bring about certain outcomes (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964; Smutny, 2008). Studies had shown that the combined affective and cognitive processes can be applied to aesthetic sensitivity, interpersonal relations, moral and ethical development, and self-knowledge in students (Eberle & Hall, 1979, as cited in Silverman, 1994a).

### ***Emotional intelligence and development***

According to VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh (2006), the development of the theoretical framework and test for understanding and assessing emotional intelligence had paved way for gifted curriculum developers to design curriculums that foster the emotional growth of the gifted. Emotional intelligence is defined as "the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 5). Mayer and Salovey (1997, p. 10) conceptualised the emotional intelligence framework into four main branches "arranged from more basic psychological processes to higher, more psychologically integrated processes" i.e.:

- 1) Perception, Appraisal, and Expression of Emotion
- 2) Emotional Facilitation of Thinking
- 3) Understanding and Analysing Emotions; Employing Emotional Knowledge
- 4) Reflective Regulation of Emotions to Promote Emotional and Intellectual Growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 11)

Mayer and Salovey (1997) further divided each of these branches into four representative abilities, which were arranged in order of their respective developmental level of emotional abilities. They added that “people high in emotional intelligence are expected to progress more quickly through the abilities designated and to master more of them” (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 10). The detailed outline of this framework provides a useful model for translating and incorporating the theoretical understandings of emotional intelligence into nurturing the emotional development of the gifted in the classroom. Mayer and Salovey (1997) highlight that everyone operates from different emotional starting places, where some people may not acquire the appropriate emotional skills and hence could develop psychological disorders. They also suggested that emotional skills could best be learnt through informal relationships between the student and teacher, who serve as an important and potentially wise adult model (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Furthermore, emotionally intelligent skills can also be taught in the standard curriculum, as illustrated in an example by VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh (2006) of a comprehensive prototypical lesson for secondary classrooms. The goal and outcome in each sample lesson design are oriented along the four main branches of emotional intelligence, whereas its activities and assessments are planned in aiming at developing students’ mastery across the levels of emotional abilities (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006).

### ***Bibliotherapy***

Bibliotherapy is the use of reading materials to produce affective change and promote personality growth and development in its readers (Hébert & Kent, 2000). The purpose of employing bibliotherapy in the gifted curriculum is to help gifted adolescents understand themselves and cope with socio-emotional problems by reading literature which relates to their personal situations and responds to their developmental needs. When the gifted adolescents begin to identify themselves with one or more of the characters in the novel, they may feel a sense of relief knowing that they are not alone in facing specific issues. The reader could then learn vicariously to solve problems through reflecting the actions of the characters in the book. Furthermore, conducting discussions during the bibliotherapy session also create opportunities for gifted adolescents to listen to their peers and understand that they too share similar feelings and problems. Friendships

may also be formed through mutual understanding within the group, which help to foster a healthy socio-emotional development (Hébert & Kent, 2000).

### ***Talent development plan***

According to Moon and Ray (2006), personal and social competencies are vital in contributing the successful and happy adult lives for talented individuals; the possession of personal and social talents would facilitate talented students’ development of high-level expertise in preparation for the various demanding career domains. Therefore, gifted students should be encouraged to develop their own personal talent plan to ensure that they have metacognitive control over the growth of their socio-emotional domains (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006). There are two types of instructional strategies, i.e. direct and indirect, which could be used in secondary schools to help gifted adolescents build the knowledge, skills, and psychological dispositions that comprise their talents. *Direct* instructional strategies aim at developing personal and social talent by explicit teaching of knowledge or skills in the personal or social domains, whereas the purpose of *indirect* instructional strategies is to provide experiential opportunities for students to practise personal or social skills (Moon & Ray, 2006).

Moon and Ray (2006, p. 257) explain that direct instructional strategies for personal talent require “developing a differentiated, sequenced personal talent curricula that can teach gifted adolescents all aspects of personal talent” to promote individuals’ “awareness of strengths, weaknesses, and personality traits”. Meanwhile, students’ personal talent can be developed with indirect means through providing “student-centred learning environments that balance challenge with support”, as well as getting teachers to model skills such as “adaptive attributions for success and failure or effective time management” (Moon & Ray, 2006, p. 256). The Autonomous Learner Model (ALM; Betts & Kercher, 1999, as cited in Moon & Ray, 2006, p. 257) is an example of a gifted education model that employs direct and indirect instructional strategies to help students develop their personal and social talents. The development of personal talent in the ALM is optimised through promoting self-awareness by identifying one’s interests, abilities, and values within enrichment, seminars, and in-depth study of self-selected topics. The ALM also includes interpersonal and intrapersonal skills development as part of the social talent development, which aims at helping students

prepared to cooperate with others in content domains e.g. enrichment, seminars, and in-depth study of self-selected topics (Moon & Ray, 2006).

### ***Career development programme***

According to Peterson (2002), career development programmes should be included in the gifted curriculum that not only focuses on the gifted students' interests and academic strengths, but also taking accounts of their personal characteristics, personal values, and personal fit in various career environment. The purpose of career development is to help the gifted become more aware of their personal needs as related to potential career contexts, such as arranging a whole-day career shadowing experience to expose them with the "mundane and dramatic aspects of the work, experience both physical and emotional stressors related to the career, and get a sense of their own fit with the types of personalities found in the field of their interests (Peterson, 2002, p. 68). Other than that, organising field trips for the students can help to correct stereotypes or mistaken impressions formed by the media regarding the working lifestyles of the industry. Peterson (2002, p. 68) also suggests that panels of adults who have made more than two career changes should be invited to prove the students that "one does not have to have 'perfect' career direction at a young age and that individuals can make changes later". This would reassure gifted students with perfectionism and multi-potentiality who might encounter issues with choosing a career pathway.

### **Incorporating Affective Curriculum in Gifted Education within the Malaysian Context**

Islamic Education and Moral Education <sup>3</sup> would serve as ideal platforms for integrating Krathwohl's taxonomies of affective and cognitive domains into the Malaysian curriculum. These taxonomies can be easily retrofitted within the current School-based Assessment Management System to evaluate students' performances within the affective and cognitive domains. It is timely to revise the curriculum for these subjects as the *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025* mentioned that the MOE has plans to enhance both of these

subjects with greater emphasis on values relating to unity and harmony among students (Ministry of Education, 2013). Furthermore, there have been criticisms that teachers of Moral Education were inclined to focus on "instilling a fixed set of values ... rather than the components of character education and cognitive moral development" (Chang, 2010, p. 7), which does not realistically foster and reflect the moral development of students in Malaysia.

Teachers could also translate the example by VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh's (2006) prototypical lesson for teaching emotionally intelligent skills into the classrooms of Islamic Education and Moral Education. Liau, Liau, Teoh, and Liau's (2003, p. 63) research on Malaysian secondary school students' level of emotional intelligence had highlighted "the importance of incorporating the concept of emotional literacy based on a pedagogy of multiliteracies" into subjects such as Moral Education and Islamic Education. According to Liau et al. (2003, p. 62), the pedagogy of multiliteracies approach provides educators an appropriate framework for developing "a comprehensive moral education programme that would enhance the emotional literacy of students". This approach exposes students directly and indirectly to their interactions with other peers and teachers, as well as with the wider community, which gives them the opportunity to engage in meaningful practices with the emotional skills that they have taught (Liau et al., 2003).

Other than that, bibliotherapy can be included as part of the existing Nilam Reading Programme in Malaysian schools, which was implemented to cultivate a reading habit among students. Teachers of the gifted should also be encouraged to incorporate bibliotherapy as part of their classroom activities during the literature component of *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malay Language) and English language subjects. A preliminary study by Ishak and Bakar (2014) on gifted students attending a school holiday programme in Malaysia had found that most gifted students would prefer to solve their own problems rather than seeking help from their home-room teachers, peers, counsellors, and parents. These gifted students were also less willing to discuss their issues with others or in a group (Ishak & Bakar, 2014). Hence, bibliotherapy is a suitable avenue for gifted students to encourage them to share and discuss their feelings among their peers, which creates a supportive environment for their socio-emotional development.

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<sup>3</sup> Moral Education is a compulsory formal subject in the Malaysian curriculum which is taught to non-Muslim students, whereas Islamic Education is taught to all Muslim students. All students are required to sit in a formal centralised public examination for these subjects at the end of Form Five (Chang, 2010).

Some elements of the talent development plan and career development programme can be identified in the current PERMATApintar Education Programme and the School Holiday Camp. Both programmes were designed to promote holistic education for the gifted and talented while developing their potentials and creativity as well as to uncover their hidden talents, which reflect the direct and indirect instructional strategies of the talent development plan (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, n.d.d). Participants in the School Holiday Camp are not only being challenged in academic-related activities, but are also required to adhere a code of honour to create a responsible and cooperative community within the programme (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, n.d.a). In addition to these existing programmes, the talent development plan and career development programme should be incorporated into the ASASIpintar Programme<sup>4</sup> as they are more relevant to older gifted students who need guidance for deciding their future career path (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, n.d.c). Nevertheless, the talent and career development programmes should not only be confined within gifted education, but also be extended into the general curriculum so that other average-ability students can also benefit from such self-development programmes.

#### **CONCLUSION and IMPLICATIONS**

Although most gifted people are socially and emotionally well-adjusted throughout their lives, there are some numbers of gifted individuals who do suffer socio-emotional issues due to the asynchrony between their cognitive and socio-emotional development. The unique personality profile and overexcitabilities in the gifted make them feel and think differently from their non-gifted counterparts, which in turn make it difficult for them to find friendships within their social group. As they enter adolescence, gifted adolescents are faced with even more dilemmas that could jeopardise their self-development if their social and emotional needs are not properly served. Gifted adolescents not only find themselves being pressured to fit within the norms to be socially accepted by their peers, but also having to deal with issues regarding their poor self-concepts, perfectionism, and multi-

potentiality. Previous research had revealed that Malaysian gifted students are not any different than their peers in other parts of the world in terms of socio-emotional issues (Bakar & Ishak, 2010; Ishak & Bakar, 2014).

Therefore, this highlights the need for applying affective curriculum in gifted education to tap into the emotional aspects of gifted students, which is then used to enhance their learning as well as their abilities in responding to socio-emotional problems. Various models could be used to develop an affective curriculum, which can be implemented within currently existing gifted programmes and the Malaysian education system. Nevertheless, Silverman (1994a) as well as VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh (2006) suggested that curriculum developers must also consider several matters in developing affective curriculum for gifted students. First, the affective programme must be deliberate and planned – it cannot be placed in response to existing problems but instead dynamically constructed to prevent their occurrence. Furthermore, it must be flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the gifted, such as allowing discussion groups to be conducted in unstructured times. Another factor to be considered is connecting the affective programme with cognitive development by employing various strategies that could serve as appropriate catalysts for enhancing students' productivity. Other than that, the presence of a trained counsellor at secondary level would be ideal for enhancing the effectiveness of the group process by acting as a consultant to the teacher (Silverman, 1994a; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006).

Besides educating gifted students, teachers of the gifted can also play a significant role in counselling them through applying some counselling skills within the classroom. This would have implications for teacher education in Malaysia, whereby student teachers should not only learn how to identify gifted and talented students in their classroom, but also be trained with adequate counselling skills to manage the socio-emotional needs of their students. In addition, the MOE and schools should encourage teachers to attend professional development courses in gifted and affective education. This is to ensure that teachers of the gifted are able to incorporate best practices when delivering affective programmes by ensuring that it directly respond to the socio-emotional issues of the gifted students.

Henceforth, it would be worthy if further investigations are conducted by the MOE and

<sup>4</sup> The ASASIpintar Programme is a pre-university course for gifted and talented students, which is managed by the PERMATApintar National Gifted Centre at the National University of Malaysia (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, n.d.c).

scholars to better understand the socio-emotional needs of Malaysian gifted students. More research should examine gifted students from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, which could potentially influence their affective development. Furthermore, it would also be useful to look at ways in which Malaysian gifted students employ various coping strategies to manage their socio-emotional issues so that appropriate measures can be taken to minimise such issues and nurture their socio-emotional growth. By equipping gifted adolescents with the appropriate affective skills, they would be able to better understand themselves and develop effective strategies to manage their socio-emotional development.

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