

How Do School Counselors Advocate for Gifted and Intelligent Children in Junior High School?

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Abstract: This case study research attempts to 1) investigate in detail the provision of advocacy services carried out by counseling guidance teachers to gifted and intelligent students in junior high school, 2) know the collaboration between counseling guidance teachers with homeroom teachers and parents in dealing with obstacles in gifted and intelligent students. Referring to the findings in schools, counselors provide two forms of advocacy services: holding academic conferences and collaborating with homeroom teachers for gifted and intelligent children. Meanwhile, to handle the problems of gifted, intelligent children in terms of learning, social, and career, the counselor collaborates with subject teachers to provide enrichment materials and participate in the Olympics. Then, with parents, arrange social activities for gifted, intelligent children. At the same time, at home, and periodically provide group guidance related to career planning. The results of this study can be used as evaluation material for schools and become an inspiration, especially for policymakers in counseling guidance to facilitate the rights of gifted and intelligent children.

Keywords: advocacy services; gifted, intelligent children; school counselor



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Introduction

Individuals are created with a variety of uniqueness, each of which is unique, with both advantages and disadvantages. One essence is that children have high intellectual advantages with an intelligence level (IQ) above average. These children are called gifted or gifted intelligent children.

A gifted child is someone who shows or can display superior performance in one or more fields with a level of ability that exceeds children his age so he requires educational services that are modified according to his needs so that his potential can be optimally actualized. (Eva & Bisri, 2018; Harrison, 1995; NAGC, 2019). Gifted students have special characteristics, namely the ability to speak and think faster, have high motivation and interest, have a strong opinion, find it difficult to build good interpersonal relationships with

their peers, and have an unhealthy perfectionist nature (Cross & Cross, 2015). The characteristics of these uniquely gifted, intelligent students need to be served appropriately according to their needs and require special education to optimize all their potential. The characteristics of these uniquely gifted, intelligent students need to be served appropriately according to their needs and require special education to optimize all their potential.

However, the conditions in the field today are still many problems faced by gifted and intelligent students, including psychologically, especially in the socio-emotional development of gifted, intelligent children who tend to be perfectionists compared to their friends, causing depression, anxiety (Christopher & Shewmaker, 2010; Gnilka, Ashby, & Noble, 2012; Reyes et al., 2015), and feeling suicidal (Cross & Cross, 2015). The perfectionist nature of gifted children is caused by the ongoing pressure to meet high-performance expectations (Callard-Szulgit, 2003; Colangelo & Wood, 2015; Mofield & Peters, 2019; Mofield, Peters, & Chakraborti-Ghosh, 2016). Gifted children appear to be socially mature but believe they experience loneliness and isolation, feel less accepted by others, and have difficulty socializing (Hidayati, 2016).

Seeing the various problems that occur in these gifted, intelligent children, it is necessary to help counselors by providing advocacy services. Advocacy services are services designed to help students regain their rights that have been neglected (POP BK SMA, 2016) because guidance and counseling teachers are responsible for supporting the needs of all students, especially gifted and intelligent students who have unique talents and developments in the academic, personal-social, and career fields. (Association, n.d.; Wood, 2010). Counseling teachers can become advocates for gifted and bright students to find resources and provide the guidance students need to pursue their dreams (Greene, 2006). In addition, counseling guidance teachers become collaborators who can access and unite stakeholders and available resources to help develop the potential of gifted and intelligent students (Greene, 2006; Lisinus & Sembiring, 2020).

This research needs to be done because there is very little literature or empirical research on advocacy by counseling guidance teachers in schools so that it can add insight to guidance and counseling teachers in their role in meeting the needs of gifted students in inclusive schools through advocacy services to develop talents and interests optimally.

The focus of this article is 1) to investigate deeply the provision of advocacy services carried out by counseling guidance teachers to gifted and intelligent students in junior high school, 2) to find out the form of collaboration between counseling guidance teachers and homeroom teachers, and parents in dealing with barriers to gifted and intelligent students.

Method

As a qualitative research, the preparation of this article uses the case study method concerning the stages (Yin, 2012; Susiani, 2021), namely 1) Preparing case study guidelines, 2) Conducting case study research 3) Analyzing case study findings, 4) Drawing conclusions and recommendations based on findings at school. Then regarding the subject and location of the case study, this study involved 2 counselors and homeroom teachers of 2 gifted intelligent students at one of the private junior high schools in the Gresik district as research subjects. Meanwhile, to collect data, the researcher uses direct observation guidelines and in-depth interview guidelines that the researcher has compiled following the research focus. Later the data obtained will be analyzed in content referring to the analysis (Miles et al., 2018), then presented systematically according to the objectives to be achieved in this case study.

Results and Discussion

Advocacy Services in Junior High School

The results of observations and interviews were conducted by researchers in junior high school at the research location. Researchers found two things regarding the provision of advocacy services for gifted and intelligent children.

a. Organizing Academic Conferences

In academic conferences, counselors involve homeroom teachers, vice principals, and related parties. Counselors with related parties explain student problems for one semester in a sequential and in-depth manner and continue by selecting several follow-ups for alleviating student problems. Especially for gifted, intelligent children, counselors ask and identify issues of gifted, intelligent children during one semester from observations and evaluations of homeroom teachers and subject teachers, besides continuing to provide understanding to teachers and homeroom teachers who cannot equate mentoring gifted and intelligent children with other students.

Based on the counselor's information, in facilitating the ability of gifted and intelligent children, the counselors and homeroom teachers collaborate with the academic achievement development team so that talented and intelligent students are guided and included in competitions or olympiads in subjects that are by the student's strengths and interests. And the result is that gifted and intelligent children can contribute to achievements at the regional or national level every semester.

b. Collaboration with Homeroom Teacher

Meanwhile, in facilitating social development, which often experiences obstacles, counselors and homeroom teachers arrange the seats for gifted and intelligent students with their classmates in groups of 2 children. And when there are school activities, talented and intelligent children are involved in representing the class with their friends. So that the child can learn to mingle and socialize with the surrounding environment while reducing individualistic and aloof attitudes in the classroom.

Handling The Problem of Intelligent Gifted Children

To restore and optimize gifted and intelligent children, the counselor tries as much as possible through several ways and approaches. So, we try to summarize and describe the results of observations and interviews into points according to the service area:

a. Learning

Academically, both learning activities and test results of gifted, intelligent children tend to be above their friends. This was said by the homeroom teacher and added to the counselor's explanation regarding the record of student IQ scores above 120 and above. However, even though they tend to be fast and above average, gifted and intelligent children get bored quickly and often don't focus on less interesting material. This condition encourages counselors and homeroom teachers to provide enrichment materials through subject teachers or the school's achievement development team.

b. Social

Handling the social aspect of gifted and intelligent children will only work effectively in collaboration with various parties, one of which is support from parents. Based on the counselor's confession, it is known that counselors often communicate and seek solutions with parents of gifted and intelligent children, especially regarding activities in the home and alternative activities outside the house so that talented and intelligent children easily mingle and have close friends.

c. Career

In the career aspect, advocacy services provided by counselors are in the form of introducing majors and specializations in high school based on the results of student psychological tests covering student interests, talents, and strengths. Gradually the counselor facilitates group guidance and light discussions with gifted and intelligent students so that they can choose extracurricular and secondary school activities that match their interests and talents.

The government pays little attention to managing gifted and intelligent children's education in Indonesia. This can be seen in the abolition of the accelerated learning program (Fachrudin, 2020). Meanwhile, abroad, especially in developed countries, education for gifted and intelligent students has been well facilitated, which is realized by obtaining clear and precise programs, services, and interventions. In Israel, the Ministry of Education coordinates services for gifted and intelligent children and offers a variety of special programs for talented children nationally (Kennedy & Farley, 2017; Zeidner & Shani-Zinovich, 2013).

A gifted and intelligent child will not be able to develop without educational services that match the needs he has. Although he has extraordinary potential, he does not necessarily become an outstanding achiever. This condition is often termed underachievement, a situation where there is a gap between the achievement obtained lower than the potential or ability of students (Sunawan, 2016). Gifted and intelligent children who experience underachievement can be caused by limited interest in learning materials. Their intelligence is classified as high, ignoring the material and getting low grades. That is, the expected results do not mean that specially gifted children do not have the ability, but because they do not like learning, they are lazy to learn it (Dahlia & Roza, 2017; Gantiny et al., 2020; Rahmawati, 2013; Syam, 2019).

So that the efforts of the counselor through this advocacy service will be very much needed by gifted and intelligent children, especially to avoid the possibility of discrimination against them. This is the function of advocacy services, namely trying to assist counselors so that the rights of the existence, life, and development of the individual concerned regain their rights that have been deprived, blocked, hampered, or limited by environmental conditions (Prayitno, 2012). Furthermore, advocacy services aim to relieve the counselee from the dire conditions he has experienced, while the specific objective is to free the counselee from the clutches of irresponsible parties (Ifdil et al., 2021; Syafrita, 2021).

The results of this study can be used as evaluation material and inspiration for various related parties, both the school where this study was conducted and for policymakers in counseling guidance such as ABKIN (Indonesian Guidance and Counseling Association) to facilitate gifted and intelligent children appropriately. In this regard, the researchers put forward three recommendations:

1. The school represented by the principal and deputy principal should form a reasoning and academic community that can facilitate gifted students to develop their abilities appropriately.
2. School counselors must make a regular consultation schedule and counseling for parents and gifted children to help solve problems.

The guidance and counseling teacher forum, namely ABKIN, needs to compile a concise guidebook for implementing advocacy services that are easy to understand and do by counselors when assisting gifted and intelligent children in school.

Conclusion

Advocacy services carried out by counselors for gifted and intelligent children at the junior high school level consist of two things: organizing academic conferences and collaborating with various parties to optimize the potential and alleviate the problems of gifted and intelligent children in the fields of learning personal-social, and career. Both are carried out openly and adapt to school conditions regarding human resources and facilities. It is appropriate that counselors are required to have sensitivity to various problems experienced by students, especially students who fall into the category of gifted, intelligent children who are often considered normal and do not need help because of their above-average abilities. Therefore, efforts to fight for the rights of students who have not been fulfilled by gifted and intelligent children in schools must always be fought for until they can be fulfilled as the core goal of inclusive education for students.

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