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Extending Renzulli's Enrichment Triad Model in Education for Gifted and Talented Learners within an Inclusive Classroom Context

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***Abstract* – Schools, in general, should inspire to provide a curriculum that caters to the learning needs of all the learners including gifted and talented learners. The pedagogies of teaching should be transformational where all learners have the opportunity to explore and enhance their gifts and talents within an inclusive classroom context, with a provision of a wide repertoire of enrichment experiences. Keeping the idea of inclusive curriculum and classrooms in mind, I am proposing an extension to Renzulli's Enrichment Triad Model which could be used within the schools' mainstream education classrooms to support the advanced level learning of all learners including the gifted and talented learners. Every school should be a place for supporting the talents of high potential self-motivated learners who have the potential and ability to re-create and develop new and creative ideas and ways of thinking. The proposed model will provide greater opportunities for learners to take control of their learning and self-assess the products of their creativity. Issues that impact on the successful practice of the proposed model within the regular classroom are also discussed.**

***Keywords* – Differentiation, Enrichment, Gifted and Talented, Inclusive Classroom.**

I. INTRODUCTION

"Curriculum experiences for gifted learners need to be carefully planned, written down, and implemented in order to maximize their potential effects" [14].

The curriculum can be simply defined as a set of carefully planned activities and experiences for a targeted group of learners. Therefore, a curriculum should be a comprehensive document that considers the holistic (physical, cognitive, social, cultural, spiritual, and emotional) needs of learners and in this case gifted and talented learners. When planning the curriculum for gifted and talented learners one must ensure that their needs aren't accidentally met but are continuously addressed. Giftedness is the most precious natural resource a civilization can have which contributes significantly towards the history of mankind, therefore "all learners should be provided curriculum opportunity that allows them to attain optimum levels of learning" [12], [13]. Gifted is described as a wide range of exceptional abilities that children may display from any age and in New Zealand, gifts and talents can be different within the context of ethnicity or culture, for example, Maori ideas of giftedness include personal qualities as well as abilities, and are grounded in Maori kaupapa [7], [2].

In this paper, I have chosen Renzulli's Enrichment Triad Model and have proposed an extension to the model. Like Renzulli's Enrichment triad the proposed curriculum model can also be used in an inclusive classroom context. The proposed model is a modification of Renzulli's Triad which introduces a type IV activity known as the 'assessment of product' by the learner. The proposed model also integrates some of the key components of the (Betts) Autonomous Learner Model.

In the following writing, I intend to provide a diagrammatic illustration of the proposed model, explaining the

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key features of how the model works. Drawing on the theory of differentiation 'content', 'process', and 'product', I will show how the proposed new model works within a regular classroom with the gifted and talented, providing them with continuous opportunity to show their gifts and talents. This model also has the potential to be used as a model for teaching senior-level Drama at secondary schools, with a variety of enrichment activities and acceleration where appropriate.

Furthermore, the paper will reflect on issues of culture, lack of professional development, funding, and school culture, as obstacles to the practice of the model. This paper also outlines some of the possible challenges associated with the successful implementation of the proposed model.

II. THE PROPOSED MODEL

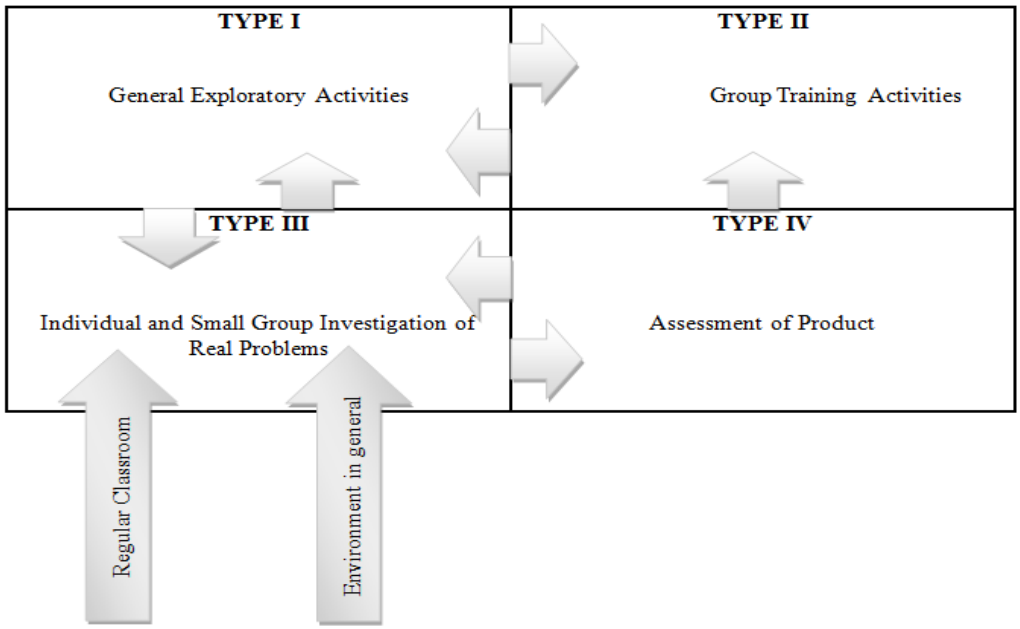

Fig. 1.

The new model represents an attempt to integrate Renzulli's Enrichment Triad Model and Betts Autonomous Learner Model. As shown above, the model consists of four interrelated types of enrichment activities. The model is reliant upon a responsive, flexible environment for their success. Like the original Enrichment Triad Model, the proposed new model also uses Type I- general exploratory activities and Type II- group training activities as catalysts for the development of student skills and interests. Type I and Type II activities are for all students in a regular classroom. Type III enrichment- individual and small group investigation of real problems is specifically designed for the gifted and talented, which requires higher ability levels, creativity, and task commitment. Students working at Type III will be recognized as gifted and talented; therefore, an orientation will be included specifically for these students. Type IV activity is the main highlight of the new proposed model which provides an extension to Renzulli's model, with the assessment of the product by the learner. Each of the activities of the proposed model is described in detail below.

Type I Activities offers students a wide range of experiences and activities to introduce a variety of topics of study that are not ordinarily covered in the regular curriculum. These experiences include "disciplines, topics, occupations, hobbies, persons, places and events" [9]. These can be facilitated through printed materials, electronic media, field trips, and guest speakers. This type intends to spark student interest through student-

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based content, encourage the discovery of their strengths, and begin to unearth their passions. Content differentiation is the key element here. Within New Zealand, the Ministry of Education [6] further encourages exposure to topics of cultural relevance for Maori Learners in particular.

Type II Activities has a process orientation, designed to give students the skills necessary to carry out investigations and develop a range of thinking and feeling processes. It also gives students the cognitive, emotional, and social skills and concepts and attitudes they need for the investigation of real problems thus coming up with a product. The activities in this type are determined by the strengths and skills of the teacher or facilitator and the needs and interests of the students. The development of skills here is specific to student independent projects, however, as the process skills taught are both cognitive and affective Davis and Rimm [3] point out the need for helping gifted students develop positive self-concepts, positive interpersonal and social skills, and education and career motivation. The development of cultural awareness and understanding is also a vital component of this type. Therefore, type II enrichment enables students to "deal more effectively with advanced, differentiation content" [9]. Used within an inclusive classroom context types I and II activities are offered to all students.

Type III Activities, however, is perhaps most suitable for gifted and talented students. There is an orientation for the gifted and talented learners at type III, to build a foundation for independent learning and to create awareness of task ahead of them. Within this aspect of the model, students investigate real problems as individuals or small groups. They become producers of knowledge rather than consumers, actively formulating a problem, designing research, and presenting a product. The activities of this type are motivating, real, relevant, and challenging therefore students have control over the differentiation of his/her curriculum. As a result, Lyn's [4] student personal interest, capabilities, and preferred learning styles are utilized to give students control over accelerating pace, enrichment, and extension. A mentorship program becomes an integral part of type III activity as the mentors help students to develop and fulfill their independent investigations. They may act like resource people, skill trainers, advisors, or facilitators.

Teacher directives are important tools for acceleration. The responsibility of the teacher is to assist students in analyzing their interests, providing them with tools of inquiry appropriate for the fields of the investigation being pursued by students, general instructions to be provided for advanced library skills, identify and locate 'How to Do It' resources and helping students to communicate their results in a realistic and meaningful manner [10]. Therefore, type III enrichment can be easily accomplished in a resource room situation with the assistance of a trained professional in gifted education. With the level of sophistication of project at hand, type III enrichment provides an opportunity for content acceleration which comes through teacher directives in providing various levels (Bloom's Taxonomy) of enrichment activities to the gifted and talented learner. Before the satisfaction of teacher directives and guidelines of the school policy for acceleration, then students are accelerated on content-based, subject, or grade skipping.

Type IV Activities involve the assessment of the product by the learner. This aspect of the model is different from Renzulli's Triad since from type IV activities a learner can go back and forward to type III and type II 'on a need-to-know basis' but from type II the learner cannot come forward directly to type IV, due to the level of sophistication required at type IV enrichment.

Links to other Models

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The proposed model is an extension of Renzulli's Enrichment Triad Model. It has been altered to cater to the type IV enrichment activities and provides some adjustments to types I, II, and III activities. The proposed model shows a reflection of both (Renzulli's) Triad and (Betts) Autonomous Learner model. Betts Autonomous Learner Model is pentagon-shaped and is designed specifically for gifted and talented students. There are five interactive dimensions to the model [3]:

1. *Orientation*- provides students and teachers the opportunity to develop a foundation for the programme, where students are introduced to the structure of the programme, including activities and their responsibilities.
2. *Individual development* - serves as a launching pad for giving students the cognitive, emotional, and social skills, and concepts and attitudes they need for lifelong autonomous learning.
3. *Enrichment Activities* - are designed to allow students to explore a variety of concepts and ideas. It involves content differentiation.
4. *Seminars* - serve as an avenue for groups of students to each research a topic and present a seminar to other students. Students plan, present, and evaluate seminars.
5. *In-depth study* - is the most demanding and challenging dimension of this model, with a small group or individual students being given the freedom to pursue their areas of interest.

The proposed model demonstrates a range of activities that links to aspects of the Autonomous Learner Model. The Type 1 or general exploratory activities of the proposed model is like Betts third dimension-Enrichment activities, where a variety of experiences and concepts are introduced to students to arise interest or passion in learners. Type II-Group training activities are like the second dimension-Individual development of Betts model, which is very much focused on process orientation, where the development of skills is specific to individual projects and the role of the teacher is significant towards the development of relevant skills in learners [1].

At this level, both models show the development of cultural awareness and understanding in students through cultural activities where learners can plan, participate in, and evaluate a cultural activity. Type III activities-Individual and small group investigation of real problems demonstrates much as the fifth dimension- In-depth study of Betts model. Activities of both models show that at this level learners become interested in pursuing a self-selected area and are willing to commit the time necessary for advanced content acquisition and process training in which they assume the role of a first-hand inquirer. Both models reflect on the role of mentors and resource room teachers to provide important directives to the learners.

The two models are also similar at this level because it requires students to develop authentic products that can bring the desired impact upon a specified audience, portraying task commitment, self-confidence, and a feeling of creative accomplishment. At this level, teachers can assess the possibilities of acceleration for the learners. Type IV enrichment activity- assessment of the product is like the requirements of an in-depth study of Betts model where the learner designs criteria for the evaluation of the product with the help of the mentor/facilitator, all do the evaluation of the process and product and then come together for discussion. Type IV activity for my model requires the learner to assess their products by establishing a criterion for assessment with the help of the teacher/ facilitator so that they can challenge their creative skills and gaining perfectionism.

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III. Catering for the Gifted and Talented Within an Inclusive Classroom Context

The following writing will draw upon the theory of differentiation to justify how the proposed model has the potential to cater to the needs of the gifted and talented students within a regular classroom and in an inclusive context.

Differentiation involves providing learning experiences to suit the needs of each student within an environment that accepts diversity [6]. Differentiation develops cognitive abilities, qualities, and culturally valued abilities, skills, learning dispositions, self-esteem, perseverance, creativity, and risk-taking [6]. Qualitative differentiation is highly desirable by educators than a quantitative one. Qualitative differentiation for the gifted and talented occur in three areas; *content*- what is taught or learned, *process*- how content is presented and learned, *product*- what is produced to demonstrate learning. The effective implementation of the content, process, and product needs the modification of the learning environment [5]. Therefore for this paper, I would show how the proposed model could transform the regular classroom into an appropriate learning environment for gifted and talented students within an inclusive context.

According to Moltzen [8], an inclusive classroom for the gifted and talented is purely and simply because that is where most of this group spend the most of their time at school, therefore, the main advantage of an inclusive classroom over other approaches is that teachers do not have to make definitive decisions about who is and who is not gifted and talented. Based on this explanation the proposed model is designed to operate in a regular classroom with gifted and talented students. The model operates with a basic philosophy that gifts and talents emerge at different times and under different conditions. Type I enrichment provides all students with a range of experiences and activities (content). Therefore, activities designed with more able students in mind can be accessed by any student in the classroom. Such an invitational environment provides a greater number of students an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities [8]. Type I activities through its classroom programmes help to develop exceptional abilities in all students.

Type II enrichment provides a variety of skill-developing activities for all students, depending on their independent projects. The strengths and skills of the teacher play a vital part in the skill development of the learner. In an inclusive context, every teacher in the school is considered a teacher for gifted and talented as a result in a regular classroom teacher has the primary responsibility for the gifted and talented students in his/her class, therefore other programmes emerge from or feed into this environment [8]. The activities under type II accommodates a wide range of special abilities and provides equitable support for them. The proposed model when used within the regular classroom, students with diverse ability levels can be easily and naturally provided for.

Type III activities of the model are product-focused and are mostly designed for the gifted and talented students in a regular classroom. It involves a further differentiation of instructions by the teacher and a special mentorship program is provided for the learners. Learners come up with real-life products for real audiences. Thus, the proposed model offers much more holistic support, not just in intellectual and academic areas, but also the affective and social domains [8]. Under type III possible acceleration can take place, where the specific curriculum content could be compacted and acceleration at the subject level is possible based on the

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sophistication of the product. The proposed model used within a regular curriculum provides greater flexibility of time, where the gifted and talented students achieve mastery in one curriculum area quicker than his/ her peers.

Type IV activity of the model can act as a catalyst to spark the interest and motivation in others specifically those with disabilities who have gone 'unnoticed'. The products of the gifted and talented acts as a morale boost for the rest of the class. Within the context of a regular classroom, the proposed model provides differentiated instructions for the learners and learners with gifts and talents, the teacher focuses on the essentials of the learner in the given context, the teacher attends to student differences, assessment and instructions are inseparable- in a differentiated classroom assessment are on-going and diagnostic, modification of the content, process, and product based on the assessment data, all students participate in respectful work, collaborative learning takes place and the teacher and learner work together flexibly, a truly responsive environment offering multiple opportunities to explore and experiment their natural curiosity [11].

The proposed model could also be used specifically for subjects like Drama at secondary schools-topic storytelling. Where type I and II activities are introduced to the class as a whole. The students are exposed to the topic, through DVDs, Youtube, guest speakers, videos, and other printed materials. Imagine a classroom of students listening to a storyteller (Type 1). During the storytelling, a group of students shows obvious enthusiasm and interest and so spends additional hours learning storytelling techniques (type II). Consequently, one student decides that she'd like to create her own story, to share at the city's storytelling festival (type III). In writing the story she discovers she needs more information about her chosen topic (Type I) and then considers the design of a costume (Type II). After her performance at the festival, she tries to assess her own created story (Type IV) with the help of the facilitator in determining the assessment criteria. Type IV enrichment gives the student an opportunity to self-assess her story creation and telling skills, what she expected, and the outcome of it. Upon the self-assessment of her product, she can go back to Type II for more ground information to design an appropriate costume for the characters in the story, getting perfectionist outcomes [6].

IV. Mechanisms Impacting on the Practice of the Proposed Model

A. *Cultural Awareness*

The development of cultural awareness and understanding is critical within the application of this model in New Zealand [6]. Therefore, it becomes important to acknowledge Maori culture in the model. The model shows a good stand from the cultural perspective, by fostering group giftedness. It is sensitive to working with students from various cultural and ability backgrounds. The cognitive skills taught at type II cater to cultural components such as spirituality, harmony, movement, affect, communalism, expressive, orality, and social time [3]. Since there is a lot of flexibility in the model, with the best facilitators all learners have an equal opportunity of developing their gifts and talents.

Programming under this model for children who are culturally different provides consideration on "maintaining ethnic identity, extracurricular cultural enrichment, learning style differences, counseling, parent support groups, accelerated and enriched curriculum and career education" [3].

B. *Professional Development*

Moltzen [8] suggests that schools should be committed to the professional development of staff through an on

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-going intensive programme, specifically targeted at regular classroom teachers and not in training specialist teachers. As this model is used within an inclusive context, every teacher in the school is regarded as a teacher for the gifted and talented, therefore, it becomes important for the school to ensure that teachers' knowledge on appropriate skills for enrichment is refreshed through continuous professional development sessions for the effectiveness of the model in the classroom. Such professional development should cover all aspects of the gifted education from identification through to programme evaluation [8].

C. *Funding*

The successful implementation of such a model will require additional expense for the school. The various types of enrichment activities delivered by the model require an abundance of resources, for the projects undertaken by an individual or group of students. Some schools are financially well to use the model to its fullest capacity; other schools reliant on government funding may find it difficult to adjust with the demands of the model. Therefore, the effect of the use of the model can vary from school to school.

D. *School Culture*

Moltzen [8] highlights that sustainability of improvement is dependent upon the school culture, which requires a shift from using models of gifted education as 'optional extra' to one where this becomes a part and parcel of the school's core business. With an emphasis on creating producers of knowledge, rather than consumers, schools can differentiate from others by showing school-wide commitment in producing genuine products in students, where management is involved in and supportive of development, and where the policy or other appropriate documentation is developed.

V. Further Issues to Consider

It is important to identify the possible challenges for the successful implementation of the proposed model in a regular classroom in light of the above practice-related issues affecting teaching in New Zealand and internationally.

1. The proposed model like Renzulli's Enrichment Triad serves as an 'enrichment only' framework and fewer provisions are given in the model for acceleration.
2. Task commitment is based on potential, as a result, the steps involved are 'loose way' or flexible, which also leads to de-motivation in students from time to time.
3. Under-achievers at times will not find some task relevant to their group, so they would not attempt it no matter they have potential.
4. Different teachers have varied teaching approaches, as a result, there could be conflicting results achieved or discrepancy in learner's skills taught by the teacher. Which shows a need for continuous professional development on the issue.

VI. Conclusion

The proposed model provides full provisions for gifted and talented students learning in a regular inclusive classroom context. This paper justifies the benefits of the proposed model and shows that the model has the potential to provide a climate where gifted students can take risks, recognize opportunities to work from their

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strengths, see an element of choice for projects, participate in challenging activities, be creative through student-initiated activities, which would encourage them to achieve excellence beyond the scope enrichment for others in the class which are important elements of provisions for gifted and talented learners in a classroom.

Furthermore, the paper also looks at the links between the proposed model and Betts Autonomous Learner Model. It explains why and how it will be a better model for the gifted and talented students used within an inclusive classroom context. I argue that the successful implementation of the proposed model involves careful consideration of factors relating to practice, which are cultural awareness, professional development provisions for teachers at school, funding, and resourcing, and the school culture. Lastly, some possible challenges in the application of the model have been identified to avoid any discrepancies in the justification of the new model. The finding of this paper strongly supports the model's appropriateness and benefits within a regular inclusive classroom content internationally.

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