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Recognising Twice-Exceptional Students: Teacher Accuracy and Nomination Cues in Saudi Schools

التعرف على الطلبة مزدوجي الاستثنائية: دقة المعلمين ومؤشرات الترشيح في المدارس السعودية

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Abstract

Purpose: To examine how accurately teachers in Saudi schools recognise twice-exceptional students, and which information they rely on when nominating students for gifted programmes.

Methods: A convergent mixed-methods design combined a vignette-based questionnaire completed by 146 teachers with follow-up interviews with twelve of them. Classification accuracy was modelled with logistic regression, and the interviews were analysed thematically.

Results: Teachers recognised the twice-exceptional profile in 38% of cases, against 81% for gifted students without a disability. Training in gifted education was the strongest predictor of accuracy, and teachers described relying on grades and classroom behaviour.

Conclusions: Twice-exceptional students risk being overlooked. Identification should use several sources of evidence, and teacher preparation should present mixed profiles explicitly.

Keywords: twice-exceptionality, gifted identification, teacher nomination, Saudi Arabia, mixed methods

المستخلص

هدفت الدراسة إلى الكشف عن دقة المعلمين في التعرف على الطلبة مزدوجي الاستثنائية في المدارس السعودية، والمعلومات التي يعتمدون عليها عند ترشيح الطلبة لبرامج الموهوبين. واتبعت تصميماً مختلطاً متقارباً شمل 146 معلماً ومعلمة، وأظهرت النتائج انخفاض دقة التعرف على هذه الفئة مقارنة بالموهوبين دون إعاقة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مزدوجو الاستثنائية، الكشف عن الموهوبين، ترشيح المعلمين، المملكة العربية السعودية

Introduction

Twice-exceptional learners combine high ability with a disability or disorder, and their strengths and difficulties can mask one another (Reis et al., 2014). In many school systems they are identified late, if at all, because nomination procedures rely on achievement and teacher judgement (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2011).

In Saudi Arabia, national programmes for gifted students have expanded quickly, yet the twice-exceptional population has received little attention in policy or research. This study asks how teachers recognise these students and which information they use when deciding whom to nominate.

Method

A convergent mixed-methods design was used. A questionnaire was completed by 146 general and special education teachers in the Hail region, and twelve of them took part in follow-up interviews. The questionnaire combined vignettes describing students with different profiles with items on teachers' training and experience.

Quantitative data were analysed with logistic regression; interviews were coded thematically and the two strands were integrated in a joint display.

Results

Teachers correctly identified the twice-exceptional profile in 38% of cases, compared with 81% for the gifted profile without a disability. Prior training in gifted education was the strongest predictor of accurate classification (OR = 2.9, 95% CI [1.6, 5.2]).

Table 1 Correct classification by profile and prior training

Profile	Trained (%)	Not trained (%)
Gifted	88	76
Twice-exceptional	54	27
Disability only	79	72

Discussion

The findings echo international evidence that a visible difficulty draws attention away from ability. Teachers described relying on behaviour and grades, which are the very indicators that disability depresses. Training that presents mixed profiles, and nomination forms that ask about strengths separately from difficulties, may reduce this bias.

Conclusion

Twice-exceptional students in Saudi schools are at real risk of being overlooked. Identification procedures should draw on several sources of information, and teacher preparation should include explicit attention to this group.

Declarations

Data availability statement

The data are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Ethics statement

The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Hail.

Author contributions

Conceptualisation and analysis: first author. Data collection: second author. Both authors approved the final version.

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Conflict of interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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