



Mawhiba-IAU Gifted Summer Programs: Connecting Knowledge, Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship

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The world has been experiencing a paradigm shift from knowledge-based economies to innovation-based economies. Countries seek to transform their citizens from consumers to producers and from job seekers to job creators. The King Abdulaziz and his Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity (Mawhiba) has responded to this need by encouraging and creating programs and services to develop students' giftedness and creativity. The purpose of this article is to describe the Mawhiba-IAU program, an innovative summer residential program to prepare gifted students to thrive in an innovation-based economy, by integrating the concepts of knowledge, creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. The design of this program was to incorporate both explicit and implicit curricula. Participants joined five different tracks: the academic program, the company, the soft skills program, the physical education activities, and the volunteer work. A challenging program is now in place for developing student's potential and encouraging behavior management. After a description of the program, both challenges and opportunities for program improvement are discussed.

Key words: *Summer Enrichment Program; Gifted Students; Innovation; Entrepreneurship; Mawhiba-IAU program.*

Introduction

In this article, we will describe an innovative and effective learning experience for gifted students. Regardless of their developmental trajectories, their area(s) of talents, levels of ability, interests, and sex would find this program to be an impressive journey to enable their total potential to flourish. The King Abdulaziz and his Companions Foundation for Giftedness



and Creativity (Mawhiba) was established in 1999 as a non-profit foundation to support the long-term vision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) for developing giftedness and creativity in students. Mawhiba sponsors many different programs at various levels of education. The focus in this article is on the summer enrichment programs for exceptionally talented high school students who scored in the top 5% on the Mawhiba Multiple Cognitive Ability Test (MMCAT), with a focus on the award-winning summer program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University of 2018 [Mawhiba-IAU].

The Context

The Crown Prince of the KSA, who is also the chairman of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs, articulated the KSA Vision 2030 (Council of Economic and Development Affairs, 2020). “It is an ambitious yet achievable blueprint, which expresses our long-term goals and expectations and reflects our country’s strengths and capabilities. All success stories start with a vision, and successful visions are based on strong pillars.” (p. 6) The vision includes three main pillars: (a) the country’s status as the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds, the “Land of the Two Holy Mosques”; (b) the determination to become a global investment powerhouse, which includes investing to stimulate the economy and diversify its revenues; and (c) transforming its unique strategic location into a global hub connecting Asia, Europe and Africa. Although the Crown Prince recognizes that the country is rich in natural resources such as oil, gold, phosphate, uranium, and many other valuable minerals, he recognizes that the country’s “real wealth lies in the ambition of our people and the potential of our younger generation.” (p. 6) One way in which aspects of this vision have been articulated by educators and concerned citizens is that the country needs to be transformed from a nation of consumers to a nation of producers and from a job seeking to a job creating mindset. Mawhiba has responded to this need by encouraging and creating programs and services to develop giftedness and creativity in students. One of the most innovative of these programs is the Summer Enrichment Program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University (Mawhiba-IAU). Its demonstrated effectiveness resulted in winning the Grand Award of Mawhiba as the best summer program for gifted students among over 40 similar programs in 2018 and international recognition by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2019. The program is a creative and progressive integration of knowledge, creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship designed to foster in students the development of skills, attitudes, and values needed for success in the 21st Century and ultimately to benefit the country by accomplishing the KSA Vision 2030.

Enrichment programs are among the most preferred educational alternatives for gifted students because of their variety and flexibility (cited in Kim, 2016). Enrichment programs or enriched curriculum is programs or curriculum that have modified content with more depth or breadth than generally provided or that have a modified process to develop a students’ higher intellectual thinking and to provide opportunities for creative production (Schiever & Maker,



2003). In Saudi Arabia, enrichment programs are often provided in informal educational settings that are not limited to certain outcomes, instead, they can allow for many developmental trajectories in which students can choose and enjoy a variety of learning experiences. In Saudi's gifted summer enrichment programs, a wide range of knowledge tracks in various fields and variety of skills development opportunities. Some emphasized important values to enable students to grow and succeed. These programs can be creative, innovative, and exciting for many students if they are planned well. Many students, in Mawhiba summer programs, had noted that the enrichment programs were a turning moment in their lives. The challenge, however, is how to develop exciting experiences for diverse gifted students that will engage them every moment and seize various opportunities and activities directing them towards a whole child development while addressing national challenges and needs. In this article, we describe an innovative program that links knowledge to creative problem solving, and problem solving to entrepreneurship to produce innovative solutions or products that support a nation's economy while developing a wide range of skills in gifted students.

Summer enrichment programs for gifted students can have a positive effect on students' achievement and socioemotional development (Aljughaiman, 2011; Cunningham and Rinn, 2007; Rinn, 2006). In her meta-analysis study involving 26 programs, Kim (2016) found that enrichment programs had a strong positive impact on both students' achievement and socioemotional development, and that the largest effect on achievement was in the summer residential programs. A summer residential program is a controlled environment, and it has many features for the program leadership team and students. For instance, for the leadership and planning team, residential programs can (a) allow for depth and breadth in content enrichment; (b) offer multiple options for a wide range of abilities and talents; (c) employ a wide range of methods, including integrated curricula and problem-based curricula; (d) provide accessibility to a wide range of resources; and (e) can control students' use of time. In a residential program, students are not commuting; therefore, they can be exposed to intensive learning experiences and opportunities that are cohesive and thorough to contribute to students' life journeys if the experiences are planned thoughtfully. The leadership team envisages that a controlled environment like this helps to shape their potential, develop their socioemotional characteristics, and provide them with depth and breadth in content and processes in a short period of time.

Knowledge, Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship

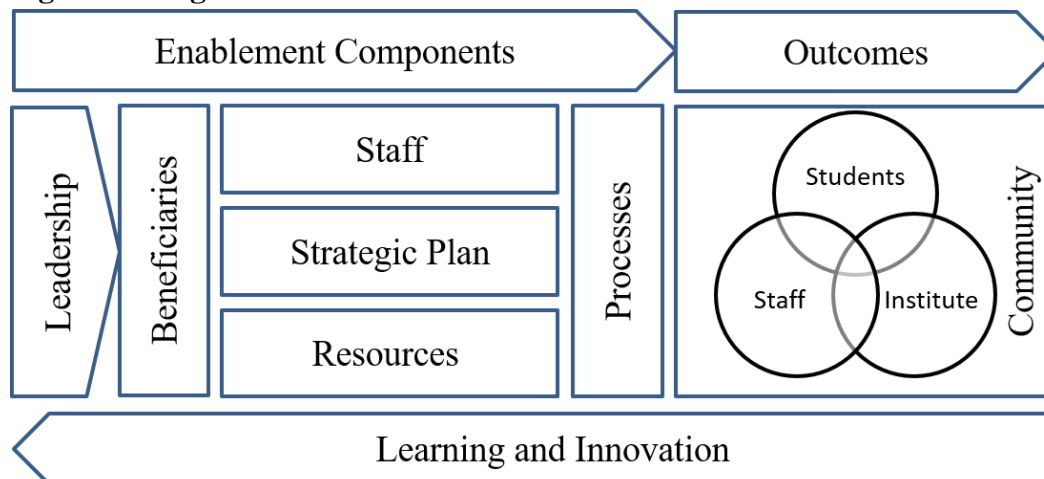
The world has been experiencing a paradigm shift from knowledge-based economies to what Oke and colleagues (Oke et al., 2009) called creativity economies. Some have called this a shift from a managed economy toward an entrepreneurial economy (Thurik et al., 2013; Maker, 2021). The managed economy is one in which economic performance is positively related to firm size, scale economies, and routine production and innovation. On the other hand, the entrepreneurial economy is one in which economic performance is related to “distributed

innovation” with the emergence and growth of innovative ventures (Kirchoff, 1994; Audretsch & Thurik, 2000, 2001). In the past, knowledge was essential and available in limited ways or to limited numbers of people. However, in today’s world, knowledge is easily available on computers and even hand-held devices; thus, in today’s economy, “...a societal premium is placed on creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial thinking and abilities” (Dino, 2017, p. 24). In the KSA, for example, one of the pillars of the Vision 2030 is to move from an economy based on natural resources to one in which the most precious natural resource is the ambition of the people and the potential of the younger generation.

Creativity has many definitions, but a useful one for our purposes is the ability and willingness to use knowledge in new ways and “generate new and novel ideas or associations between existing concepts” (Dino, 2017, p. 24). Innovation can be defined as “the ability and willingness to implement knowledge, ideas, or concepts in a specific context with the intention of producing outcomes that are original, useful, appropriate, and actionable” (Dino, 2017, p. 24). Entrepreneurship is the ability and willingness to identify and capture “opportunities for useful and actionable outcomes in which a need could be satisfied, value could be created, or a solution could be found for an intractable problem” (Dino, 2017, p. 24). Unfortunately, the constructs of creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship often are studied separately, leading to a lack of integration of the concepts and their use to develop a talent pool. However, in practice, programs are being developed in which these concepts are inextricably interwoven (Maker, 2021). This is the case in the program we describe in this article.

Theoretical Framework Supporting the Program Development

Figure 1. Program excellence model



Using the overall systems approach consisting of input, processes, output, and impact, the leaders of the project searched for a model that could be useful for designing a program of this type. They chose the European Framework for Quality Management, which included two major components: enablement and outcomes (Figure 1). It was missing a minor component, which



was implied but not really stated: the “beneficiaries.” In this case, the main beneficiaries were the specially selected gifted students who were expected to have the ability and motivation to contribute to the long-term economic and cultural development of the country. However, the beneficiaries also included the staff, the university and community, and the processes developed. All these beneficiaries worked together to produce a positive impact on the individuals, their communities, and the country as a whole. Enablement in the model consisted of the leadership, the staff, the team that designed and delivered the major program components according to a strategic plan, the resources allocated for the program, and the processes used. If the enablement component is of high quality and delivered in accordance with the strategic plan, positive results are relatively certain (EQMF, 2021).

Design Team

The design team for the Mawhiba-IAU program consisted of individuals with a wide range of skills, achievement levels, and records demonstrating high commitment. However, all were involved in developing or implementing creative and innovative ideas, have the ability to inspire others with a clear vision, and were willing to foster students’ abilities to use resources efficiently and intelligently. The grounded belief of the project director was that collective teachers and team efficacy was the driving force for excellence and enabled the achievement of outstanding results (Donohoo, O’Leary, & Hattie, 2020). Even though financial rewards were available, no one who was recruited among the team members was driven by only the financial incentives. The question was always what sort of contribution the individual was planning to offer the program.

Design Principles

The overall academic program model was based on the framework recommended by Maker (1982) and Maker and Schiever (2010) in their synthesis of research and practices in education of gifted students in which principles have been derived from the literature. The principles were designed to build on and extend the characteristics of gifted individuals. The framework includes providing complex, high level content, processes including complex and creative thinking, products that are innovative and unique, and learning environments that facilitate the success of the content, process, and product principles important for gifted students. The design team emphasized comprehensive development, which included challenging and exciting activities in which students were expected to think creatively and critically rather than memorizing information, and including both breadth and depth in the concepts and content of the program.

Another design principle was that the program needed to be both flexible and structured. For example, prior to the program, students could choose from several academic tracks; however, their days during the program were totally structured. Every hour was planned. These



structured activities were designed to accomplish the goals of the program and to make certain that all students experienced all the components of the program. The design of the program also was driven by national priorities, specified in the vision for 2030, which are related to economic development, creation and use of technology, and consideration of the unique location of the KSA and sub-challenges related to these three priorities. Students could choose to focus on a problem or develop a business that related to one of the national challenges or opportunities. Another design principle was that the program should be interest- and individual-based, emphasizing diversity and uniqueness. Not only could students choose the academic track, but they had many opportunities to demonstrate their special talents and interests. An important aspect of this principle was that students completed extensive questionnaires prior to the program (e.g., food allergies, cognitive challenges, health challenges, and any other conditions that might affect their participation in the program) to provide a personal profile enabling the staff to provide special services when needed and plan for potential challenges during the various activities of the program.

Another unique part of the design was to incorporate both explicit and implicit curricula. Explicit curricula and learning came through participation in the different experiences provided by faculty and teachers during the academic program and other planned activities. However, during all these experiences and activities, the team designed ways in which students could learn from each other without staff intervention or direct instruction. During the course of a day in the program, students participated in five different teams, each time with different team members: the academic track, the company, the soft skills program, the physical education activities, and volunteer work. An emphasis in all the program components was on collective effort and reward rather than pointing out the successes or failures of individuals to emphasize that the concept of “winning and losing” is the collective responsibility of all team members. Awards were given to teams that produced excellent solutions and programs, while any failures also were attributed to the ineffective or lower quality working of the group rather than blamed on any one individual in the group. Using this approach reduced negative competition among individuals and increased positive competition among teams. This approach also ensured an optimal development pathway for students with different talents and a fulfilling experience for students in which they appreciated the creativity of diverse minds with different scientific talents and minimized asocial traits and arrogant working styles (Feist, 2006).

A key idea for the team was to design a program that would give the students an unforgettable experience: one that would stay with them throughout their academic careers and into their professional lives. This design principle was driven by the concept of collective teacher efficacy (Donohoo et al., 2020). Among over 250 factors studied, collective teacher efficacy was the factor that contributed most to students' achievement (Cohen's $d = 1.57$). Collective teacher efficacy is “...the perceptions of teachers in a school that the faculty as a whole can execute the courses of action necessary to have positive effects on students” (Goddard, 2001,

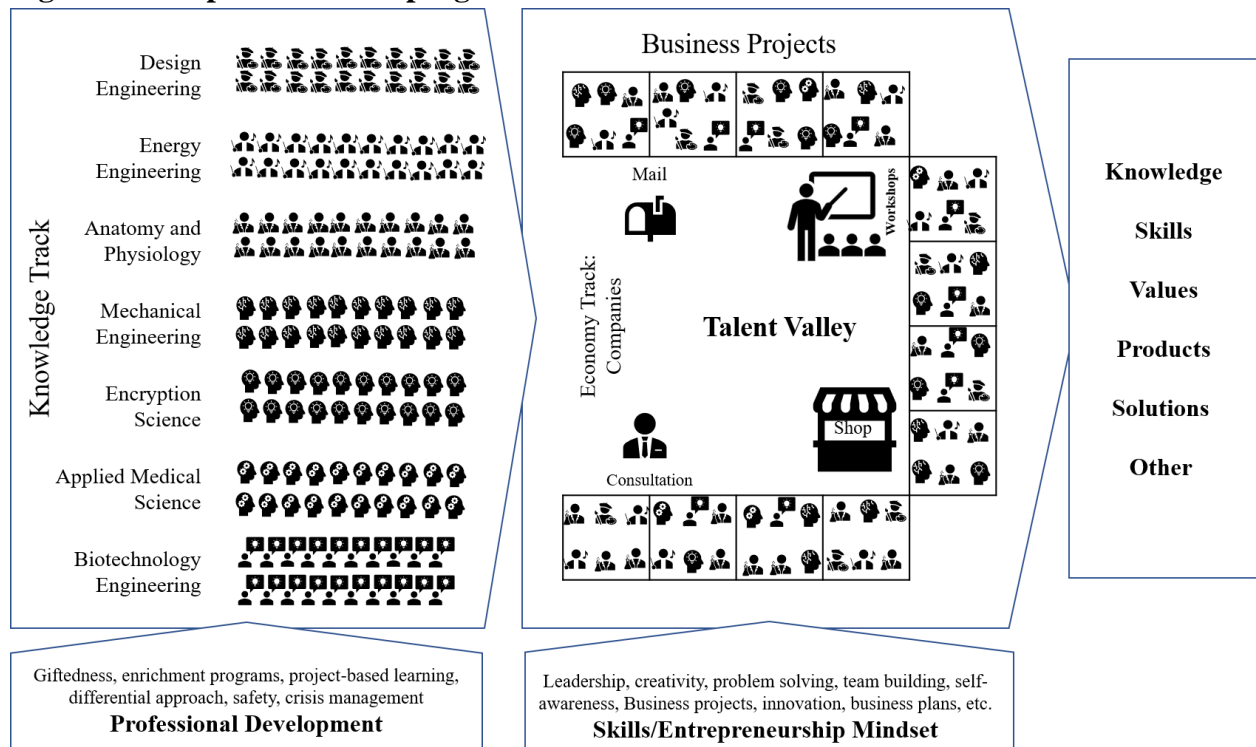
p. 467). We believe all educators need to aim high and to provide learning experiences that are memorable and exciting.

Theories Guiding the Design

Several learning theories were important in the design of teaching and learning experiences: behaviorist, cognitive, and social constructivist. The behaviorist perspective was demonstrated in several contexts during the program, such as encouraging motivation by giving positive reinforcement for desired behaviors and minimizing undesired ones. A cognitive approach was employed by designing all experiences to demonstrate the discovery of knowledge. This stimulates intrinsic motivation to pursue further discoveries and new learning opportunities (Sternberg, 2020). It also includes the central concept of constructive feedback (Donohoo et al., 2020). Social constructivism was a guide for forming learning communities within the program. A student participated in and worked with various heterogeneous and homogeneous teams and had the chance to interact with diverse gifted minds. Integration of a variety of learning theories in a program facilitates students' learning at a maximum level (Olson & Hergenbahn, 2012).

Components of the Program

Figure 2. Components of the program



Components of the program (Figure 2) include (a) student choice among knowledge-based tracks such as encryption, energy, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering,



biotechnology, anatomy and physiology, and applied medical science; (b) student participation in a semi-work environment in which they are assigned to a “company” that consists of individuals from all of the diverse knowledge-based tracks, with the task of developing a business plan to address one of the challenges from the National Priorities such as “diversify the capabilities of the economy”, “expand the variety of digital services”, or transform “the unique strategic location into a global hub”; (c) development of soft skills such as personal skills (initiative, values, vision, critical thinking, time management), social skills (listening, collaboration, teamwork), and psychological skills (self-awareness, stress management, personal identity, self-confidence) through both direct (workshops, self-reflection, input from others) and indirect (being placed in a team with other students with different skills and interests with a common goal) methods; (d) management of the work environment and resources for all the companies (including selling supplies to the groups for work on their project) and (e) engaging in social activities to benefit the community. Each of these components is described in the following sections. In practical terms, these components of the program reflect what Maker (2021) had conceptualized as what exceptional talent needs and development in the 21st century context.

Student Choice Among Knowledge Tracks

Students accepted into the program chose one of the following knowledge tracks: (a) Energy or Electrical Engineering, (b) Mechanical Engineering/Biotechnology, (c) Principles of Engineering Design, (d) Encryption and Secure Information, (e) Anatomy and Physiology, and (f) Applied Medical and Biological Sciences. From 8 am to 3 pm, students participated in programs taught by specially selected faculty at the university, who also were involved in professional development experiences prior to implementation of the program. Professional development experiences included principles for teaching gifted students, differentiation of the curriculum to meet different needs and levels of knowledge/ability, and ways to meet students’ challenges such as safety, health, and homesickness.

In the academic tracks, students were engaged in project-based learning, focused on higher order thinking rather than memorization and recitation, involved in experiential and hands-on-based learning activities, and given many opportunities to demonstrate their special talents. Students are given problems to solve, such as how to generate energy from the sun, from the wind, or from the sea; and they work together in teams using problem-based learning to develop their solutions. An important part of the academic programs was for students to reflect on their learnings, so they understand why they are involved in the planned learning experiences. Students also receive services based on their special needs.

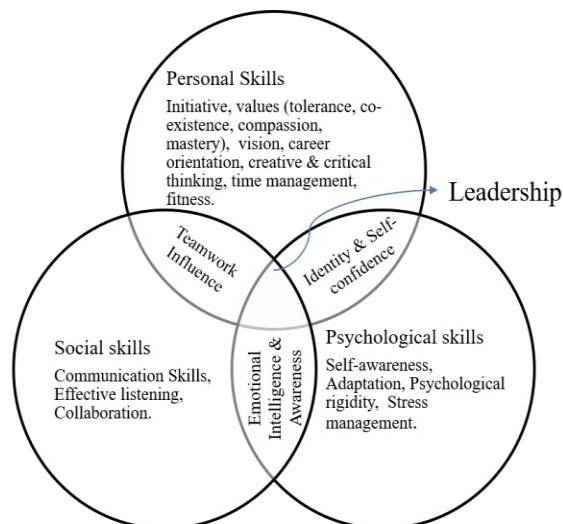
Semi-Work Environment

The second major component of the program seldom has been included in programs for gifted students. In this part of the program, students from different knowledge tracks participated in a semi-work environment from 4pm to 8pm. They were expected to choose one challenge or theme from the National Priorities and to develop solutions that led to a business plan to address this challenge. The key feature of this component was to make a clear connection between the knowledge needed by the KSA and the ways this knowledge translated into solutions by putting these solutions into start-up companies' products and services that could serve the economy in the future. Students were expected to include artificial intelligence, virtual solutions, and data-driven solutions and applications in all their companies. They create a brand for their companies, developed business plans, conducted feasibility studies, and developed methods for generating resources to fund their businesses.

During this part of the day, one to two students are pulled from each group to participate in workshops on “soft skills” such as creativity, leadership, self-awareness, and team-buildings. By the time, the program was over, all students from each group had participated in the workshops.

Development of “Soft Skills”

Figure 3. Soft skills



Soft skills are defined as the emotional, motivational, and social skills students need to be successful in the world of the 21st Century, the world of the entrepreneurial, creative economy. Soft skills are divided into three clusters that interact (Figure 3): (a) *personal* skills such as initiative, values such as tolerance, co-existence, compassion, mastery, vision, career orientation, critical thinking, analysis, time management, and fitness; (b) *social* skills such as communication, effective listening, and collaboration; (c) *psychological* skills such as self-



awareness, adaptation, psychological rigidity, stress management, and meditation. At the confluence of all three is self-awareness, self-leadership, leading others, and creativity. At the intersection of personal and social skills are teamwork, influence, and motivation; at the intersection of psychological skills and personal skills are personal identity and self-confidence; and at the intersection of psychological skills and social skills are emotional intelligence, anger management, and cross-cultural awareness.

Development of these skills was accomplished through both implicit and explicit learning experiences. The workshops offered to students during the semi-work environment are examples of the explicit teaching of these skills. Implicit learning came through being placed with many different teams during different parts of the program. For instance, participants worked in teams during the problem-based learning experiences in the academic program, then students from different knowledge tracks were placed in different work environment groups. They also are pulled from these work environment groups to participate in workshops for explicit development of the skills. An innovative way the team designed to combine implicit and explicit development of skills was to assign each student to another student for the purpose of giving feedback. The students did not know who was assigned to whom. Using structured constructive feedback and situational behavioral impact [SBI] (Clark, 2018), students described a particular behavior of the individual they observed, including when and where the behavior occurred and, most importantly, the impact on the individual who was reporting as well as the impact on others. This part included a description of the ways the individuals felt about the behavior described. These reports were given to each person every day using a mailbox on site. Students deposited their SBI for classmates and then they were checked by staff members before being distributed to students to ensure no offensive feedback was given.

Time management skills were not taught directly; however, students experienced real-life consequences. If, for example, they missed the bus that took them to the various activities, they had to walk. If they felt asleep in class, teachers, teaching assistants, or other students would remind them to get more sleep so they could be more alert in the future.

Management of the Work and Social Environment

Students also managed the space where everyone was working. For instance, there was a “shop” where all the students could get items they needed to work on their projects; this shop was managed by different students at different times, but all participated in decision-making about the shop. Each team had a budget for supplies, so they could learn to manage funds they have available. One year, a group bought all the glue and sold it at a higher price to generate funds for their project; another auctioned off all its materials.

Other service activities were carried out within the “community” of the program. For instance, on Friday of every week, groups demonstrated the progress they made in their projects by



presenting to a panel of judges. These demonstrations, along with talent shows and social and cultural plays were arranged and managed by students. During the weekdays, a group of students collected names of promising talents like standup comedy, cubic puzzle solver, and other interesting talents, and arranged for the talented students to showcase their abilities.

Creative Break

After spending a significant part of the day in an academic program, students had one hour, from 3-4pm, in which they participated in creative shows such as to dress like a character from literature or history and demonstrate a real or imagined event in a funny or creative way. Another interesting activity was “genius missions (GM)” constructed for those who did not comply with one or more of the rules of the program. These were ways for students to be reminded of the importance of following the guidelines in the student handbook they received prior to the program, while also developing their creative thinking. Usually, the first GM was given intentionally to the program director to signal all students and staff members that no one was exempt! Because all students were together in the auditorium at this time, organizers had an opportunity for announcements and logistical planning with students and faculty. This creative break seemed to play the role of releasing stress and re-energizing students to get ready for the second half of the day.

Social and Physical Program

For a few minutes after completing the day’s work on business plans and entrepreneurship development, the staff conducted a “Red Carpet Ceremony” in which they highlighted productive teams from the entrepreneur component, recognized outstanding leaders, and celebrated exceptional performance of students in the academic track. Families were welcomed to participate in this ceremony virtually in which awards were given and music was played. Pictures were taken, tweets were posted, and excitement was at the highest level. After the ceremony, students joined another team for various sports activities such as body-building, swimming, basketball, squash, and other activities for one and one-half hours. After taking the bus back to their dormitories, they were given their mobile phones to use for an hour before they went to bed. The phones were taken away at the 11:00 pm curfew.

Student Behavior Management

An essential part of any intense, challenging program is to have in place procedures for student behavior management. For the Mawhiba-IAU program, procedures included the following:

- Designing the program in a way that limited behavioral problems.
- Raising and managing the level of expectations from students and teams in the program.

- Predicting behavioral, psychological and social problems in advance and having intervention plans in place in advance.
- Clarifying the rules and regulations associated with the program and having students and their parent(s) sign the list.
- Developing a policy to deal with students' good conduct as well as their behavior problems.
- Developing a risk management plan at various levels.
- Acting wisely in critical situations by using a participative leadership style.
- Reducing negative behaviors by enforcing positive values.

Logistics and Facilities

The Mawhiba-IAU gifted program was granted full accessibility to IAU logistics and facilities. All faculty, labs, transportation, dorms, dining areas, restaurants, recreational facilities, prints, playgrounds and other resources were accessible to the Mawhiba-IAU leadership team with full support from all administrative departments. In addition, because the IAU campus is relatively new, all the supporting facilities were world class. For instance, students were assigned a single bedroom with a private bathroom, the rooms were not of a lower quality than Four-Star rooms in hotels. Rooms had high speed internet, a desk, chairs, and table lamp with amenities. Auditoriums were equipped with huge screens so students could watch a movie. Catering and food were available through the university restaurants. Without such support from the senior management and access to world-class facilities, the program would not have achieved the ultimate results.

Organizational Structure

Organization of the program started with assigning a program director who was nominated by IAU and accepted for a contract with Mawhiba in two main phases: planning and execution, in which the planning phase consumed the most time. The program director took the responsibility of forming a steering committee that included two deputy directors, one for the scientific programs and one for logistics. The planning phase started by reviewing best practices and guidelines from the sponsor to define the scope of the program. Then the steering committee started recruiting potential candidates for the following positions: instructors, trainers, residence assistant, emotional and social counselor, lab technicians, transportation team, catering advisor, volunteers, dorm advisor, and security team. All team members had an orientation about the program and the specific roles and responsibilities listed in their contracts. To ensure dedication and punctuality, contracts were not signed right away; instead, members were given a chance to demonstrate their commitment during the initial phase of the project. The challenge always was how to keep the size of the team manageable and achieve all tasks needed in the program. Thus, the program director was looking for multitalented individuals with proven records of results. During the planning phase, the program director and steering



committee focused on developing the program blueprint, allocating resources, and ensuring use of the best building blocks for each component and each element of each component.

Following the planning, communication started with students and their families. Then, family and students were invited to attend an orientation day before the launch of the program. Then the program started for three days with high expectations for the time spent by students. They woke up at 6am and went to bed at 11pm with only 1 hour to use their cell phones. Then a negotiation scene was orchestrated during the creative break. Team members (who were student advocates) and the program director (who was the program advocate) settled the case by increasing about 1 hour in sleep time and a 15 min increment in cell phone time. Students considered this a winning case while the program director demanded more effort and commitment. Most importantly, students' counselors and resident assistants, met with the program director late every night to ensure resolutions to critical issues and plan the next day.

Conclusion

The IAU program was designed to make an essential connection between knowledge perceived as being essential in the world of the future, creative thinking about that knowledge, and innovative use of knowledge and skills to meet the perceived needs of the KSA in the future. It included a focus on gifted students' potential to be leaders, creative problem solvers, and entrepreneurs, and was designed to provide students who have high potential with the knowledge, skills, and values they need to realize this potential.

The Mawhiba-IAU program was more than an enrichment program in science and soft skills; for many it was a life changing experience that was challenging, demanding, and rewarding. In social media channels students expressed their sincere appreciation for their experiences within this program and highlighted intangible benefits such as being productive, proactive, and appreciative of the diversity of minds and cultures.

Students were not the only beneficiaries of the program. Even though the program for staff was demanding and exhausting, they also expressed appreciation for their experiences and highlighted various achievements they attributed to the program. Faculty members were amazed by the ways gifted students grasped concepts and found new and enjoyable ways to teach university students. They thought the program was a new educational experience for them. Some staff members, who were volunteers without compensation, thought the program was an enjoyable experience and would appreciate being called again. For resident assistants, they worked with gifted teens for over three weeks, which exposed them to many challenges. They were able to try different problem-solving techniques. For the leadership team, it was an encapsulated journey of leadership experience in which one was given an opportunity to deal with all the challenges a leader would face in years of experience in just few months of planning and three weeks of execution.



At the institutional level, IAU has gained a great reputation as a human capital accelerator. IAU was among the top choices, if not the first, for gifted students who planned to attend college. IAU developed its image among students, families, and the community. In one radio broadcasting program, the director highlighted the concept of the program, and as a result, many social media representatives visited the program and provided coverage for businessmen and community leaders. The IAU president commented that the Mawhiba-IAU program brought great attention to the institution and paid off the host. In sum, the impact was beyond what was planned and expected at all levels.

On the other side, the many challenges and difficulties were encountered at the organizational level, leadership level, individual level, and family level. At the organizational level, a successful journey results in pride, while failure sometimes results in placing blame on others. While many would attribute the success of the program to their support, credit is always a problem between partners and needs to be addressed in a balanced and professional manner, giving all organizations and individuals the appropriate amount of credit. In addition, full support from the senior management of the institution is essential when hosting a program such as this, especially when providing full access to all facilities and campus activities.

At the leadership of the program level, finding multi-talented human resources who were driven by belief in the value of the program rather than financial compensation, were committed, and were available at no cost was the most difficult task the program leaders faced during recruitment for the program. The program was demanding at all levels, and it had a lot of complexities, especially because of the short time period in which it operated and the desire to make the model sustainable. An interest in improving the quality continuously from year to year increased the challenge because not all team members would like to rejoin the team.

At the individual level, the program was very exhausting for all engaged individuals: students, staff, management team, and outsourced services people. For students, working from 6am until 10pm was beyond their expectations and far from their comfort zone. The management team needs to be flexible to adapt, cope, and change if needed. More often the team needs to negotiate with members, considering the pros and cons of different solutions, and keep the ultimate goals of the program at the center of any decisions. The first three days of the program usually present the greatest challenge for the management team. To avoid problems during this period, the leadership team needs to anticipate challenges and have a rigorous plan for resolving anticipated and unanticipated problems. For the staff, the first three days may be less challenging because in the planning phase, they anticipated problems and designed ways to solve them. However, minor issues could surface due to behavioral coping and adapting problems.



At the family level, security is a major concern, along with homesickness. In Saudi Arabia, boarding schools are rare and not the norm. Even though the senior management team communicated with family members about the program early through different means, some mothers and fathers asked to withdraw their students in the first few days. Program expectations and provisions for the safety of their children physically and emotionally, were communicated early in the process, yet some became concerned after the program had started. Bringing “ambassadors,” students from previous programs, to assure the family would be helpful, as well as having a social and emotional counselor and well-designed program for un-coped gifted students.

Finally, during the program, individuals were stimulated, and growth was evoked in minds through questions, challenges, place, time, and boundaries. In their journeys, hurdles, challenges, joy, excitement, and pain were experienced. In the Mawhiba-IAU abysmal valley, the only choice that was permitted to participants was a challenge; Mawhiba-IAU was an SOS-voice to help go through the valley.



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