Using State District Program Plans to Analyze District Policies in Identifying and Delivering Services to Gifted Students

NATIONAL CENTER FOR
RESEARCH ON GIFTED EDUCATION

Carolyn M. Callahan, E. Jean Gubbins, Mona Alimin, Annalissa V. Brodersen, Melanie Caughey, Susan Dulong Langley, Sarah R. Luria, Karen Ottone-Cross, & Sunhee Park

Purpose of Study

Studies of the current state of program implementation in gifted education have relied on survey self-report data (Callahan, Moon, & Oh, 2013; CSDPG & NAGC, 2015)

In this study we attempted to address two shortcomings of this previous work:

1) the lack of complete pictures of the state of implementation because of limited survey responses, and

2) the lack of a theory of change to tie the findings to probability of success in bringing about maximum development of talent

Method

Sample/data sources
- All district program plans in two states
- Survey responses about practices in two states
- State 1, $n = 115$
- State 2, $n = 178$

Coding scheme development
- Iterative process, based on Theory of Change elements
- Final coding scheme consists of 133 total items

Inter-rater agreement
- Plans coded by nine-person coding team
- Every tenth plan coded by all nine team members
- Inter-rater agreement above 87% for all commonly scored district plans

Selected Results

Theory of Change Element	Policy 1	Practice 1	Policy 2	Practice 2
Preparation or Talent Development Program	82.6%	38.8%	03.0%	28.0%
Identification				
· Teacher nominations/referral	34.8%	91.3%	59.6%	93.1%
· Ability testing	92.2%	95.1%	70.8%	94.9%
· Achievement testing	97.4%	96.1%	68.0%	96.0%
· Universal screening	74.8%	82.5%	58.4%	95.4%
· Occurs at specific grade level	79.1%	100%	59.6%	97.7%
· Selection committee/study team	88.7%	63.1%	66.3%	75.4%
Service delivery through use of pull-out classes	68.7%	74.2%	43.3%	56.5%
Acceleration practices – *district* report	92.2%	90.3%	70.8%	93.1%
– *school* report		55.7%		64.9%

Theory of Change

National Center for Research on Gifted Education
Theory of Change (Phase 1)

Discussion

- The states differ in district policies about talent development programs, yet both states reported similar program offerings in practice.
- Policies and practices in the following areas are in alignment with each other in State 1:
  - Ability testing
  - Achievement testing
- In both states, reported identification practices are aligned with the following Theory of Change elements:
  - Teacher nominations/referral
  - Universal screening
  - Selection committee/study team
    - State 1 aligned more in policy than in practice
- Despite district-level policy, reports about practice at the school-level indicate lack of acceleration implementation in ~50% of schools
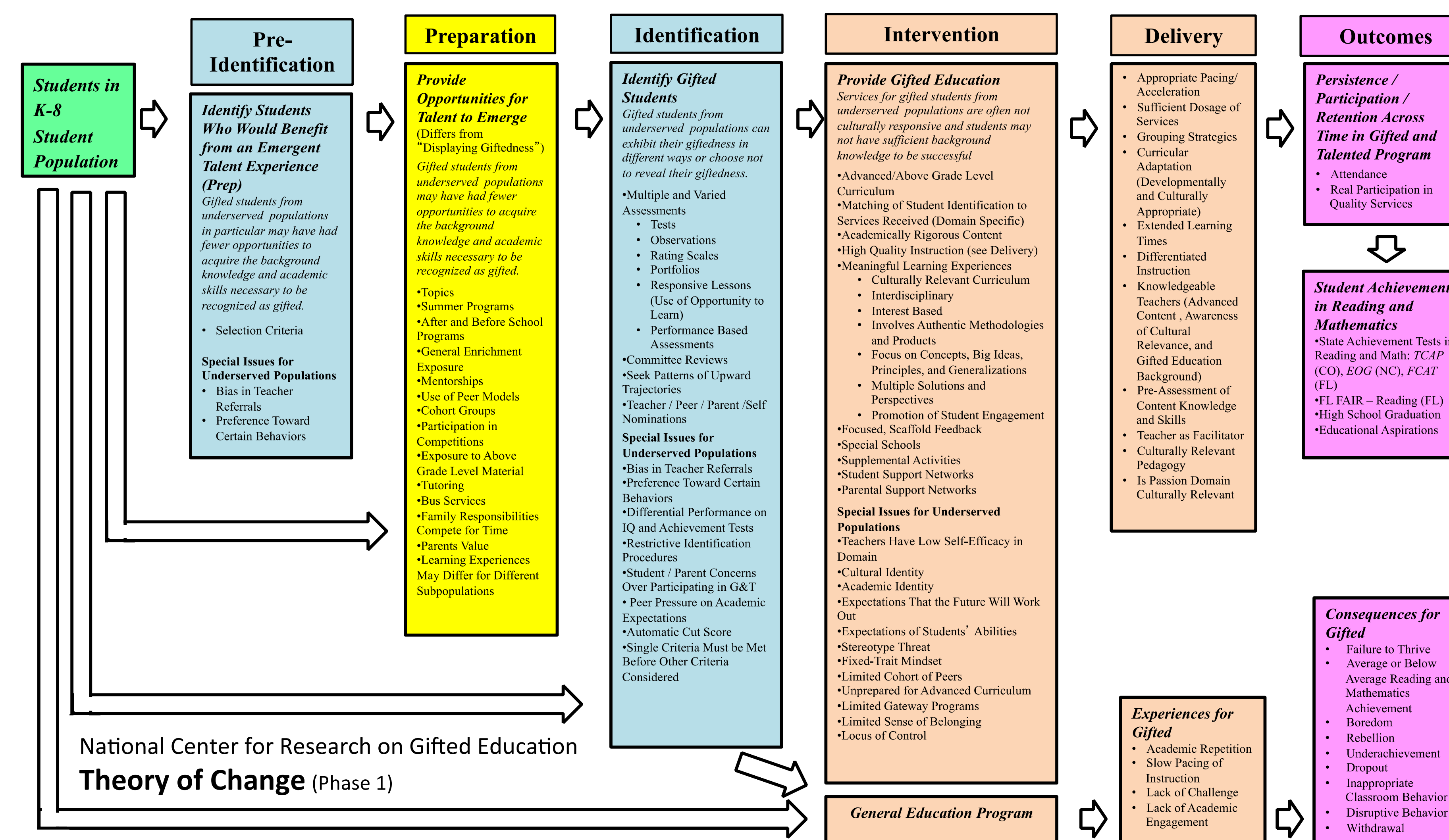
Implications

- Future research should examine
  - whether and to what extent district policies are aligned with state policies.
  - whether and to what extent reported practices are aligned with program policies within and across each individual district.

References

Callahan, C. M., Moon, T. R., & Oh, S. (2013). *Status of elementary gifted programs 2013*. Retrieved from National Association for Gifted Children website: http://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/key%20reports/ELEM%20school%20GT%20Survey%20Report.pdf

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