Guided Inquiry Projects: Enrichment for Gifted Pupils

Urška Repinc & Primož Južnič
University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Primary school teachers develop work schemes to foster the appropriate skills and social abilities in their pupils. These schemes often include systematically providing enrichment activities for gifted pupils. In collaboration with teachers, school librarians can contribute and positively influence gifted pupils through research project work. Gifted pupils need challenges and opportunities through which they can express their talents. This paper describes a study with gifted pupils who engaged in guided inquiry activities led by a school librarian and organized outside of regular classes. The results suggested that the experience was not only positive for gifted pupils but also for the entire school community and the school’s immediate and possibly wider environment.

Introduction

Guided inquiry is recognized as beneficial approach to teaching and learning in which school librarians provide opportunities to create meaningful, inquiry based tasks and assessments (Gordon, 2010). Like other educators, school librarians contribute to work with gifted pupils. Effective provision of activities for gifted pupils can be achieved through collaborative work in inquiry based projects. An academic gift itself does not guarantee higher level of information literacy; pupils must learn and experience the use of information for creative writing. Diversity of information sources presents one of the challenges in this process. Research project work provides pupils and educators opportunities for emotional and social experiences: team work, public presentation experiences, task persistence, and a healthy measure of competitiveness among pupils. But the motivation for students to undertake this kind of work is not self-evident. A recognition reward after successful work can be one source of motivation for next project. Complex tasks in a yearlong project give opportunities to gifted pupils with different gifts and talents and different characters to realize their potentials.

The effective provision of programs for gifted and talented pupils is not only important for pupils but also for the school as a driver of its general improvement and for the nation as a force for its prosperity. The results of effective education are a source for increasing opportunities for all (Freeman, et al. 2010), and the provision of programs for gifted pupils is an important component of personalization and equal opportunity in schools. The execution of programs is more successful when a large number of educators recognize their responsibility in this field. School librarians can contribute their share through project work in collaboration with other teaching professionals. Although there are different definitions about what “gifted”
means and much research needs to be done on the phenomenon, the goal of schools is clear: the emphasis should be on providing an environment where gifted and talented pupils can fulfill their potential.

**Literature Review**

There is no single concept of giftedness. As the concept of identifying and working with gifted pupils in Slovenia and for the provision of programs for gifted pupils in primary schools (nine years, age six to fourteen), is based on the ideas of Joseph Renzulli. For the identification of gifted pupils, Renzulli’s “Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness” (2005) is important. The three rings are 1) Above Average Ability; 2) Task Commitment, and 3) Creativity. Renzulli (2005) also introduced an Enrichment Model for the design of gifted programs. According to this model, there are three types of enrichment. Type 1 enrichment includes general exploratory activities such as guest speakers and visiting interesting places, events, and institutions; Type 2 enrichment includes gaining new skills such as research skills, independent learning skills, thinking skills, communication skills, and methodology skills in various topics and fields; and Type 3 enrichment includes individual and small group investigation of real problems. Here pupils become “experts” in the disciplines being investigated through learning experiences employing research skills to solve real problems. Creative products are subsequently shared with the appropriate audiences. The Enrichment Model for gifted pupils proposes that school and the general environment experience must be connected and considered. In Slovenia it is the recommended instructional strategy in programs for gifted students and is included in the majority of introductory texts as a means for differentiating and individualizing instruction.

Learning is effective when there are opportunities to enjoy the process, and when pupils choose the project topic, they tend to enjoy it more. Renzulli’s Enrichment Model includes different types of activities (from Type 1 to Type 3); some are more leisure-focused than others. It helps if more leisure-oriented activities are included in a project; work should not be intensive all of the time. Intrinsic and extrinsic factors of motivation are interwoven and influence each other. Those who become more intrinsically motivated will continue this kind of work year after year (Repinc & Južnič, 2011). In Slovenia, when mentors of gifted students design the inquiry part of the project, something linked to the local cultural and natural heritage is usually explored. Some mentors are attracted by this theme, and the results and final products can be new and surprising for mentors as well. In this way, the mentors are also learners in the process. The role of parents in motivating pupils can be very positive. Mentors call a meeting with parents at the beginning of school year, so parents are informed enough to ask their children about their work and can encourage them in project activities. A school librarian’s primary concern is pupil improvement in information literacy and reading. Information use, reading, and all interactions among pupils, mentors, and others that occur during such a learning process are the basis for constructing the pupils’ new personal knowledge (Shenton, 2011; Todd, 2006). In this way, school libraries are places of new knowledge production as well as reading and information use.

The work of searching for new learning opportunities needs special inspiration. The implementation of new ideas demands energy, enthusiasm, and persistence. Work with gifted pupils cannot be routine. Innovation means taking a risk and judging the possibilities for its
success. How a school librarian can inspire gifted pupils depends on his image of himself. Does he see himself as someone who supports the learning process or as one who inspires it as well? They search for and collect evidence about their work (Todd, 2005). Searching for new opportunities and challenges of work with gifted pupils is also enhanced by “thinking outside the box” (Markless, et al, 2009). Among other things, reading can be inspiring. A school librarian’s position is unique compared to that of teachers because there is usually one librarian in school (Hartzell, 2002). Almost no one else in school has the opportunity to meet and interact with all the students and teachers. Through joint curricula activities such as lessons in the library, the librarian becomes familiar with how different teachers and classes work and can figure out how to enhance or participate in activities.

Projects that last the entire school year can provide enrichment for gifted pupils. For work with gifted pupils, a holistic approach is very important. In addition to their cognitive skills, the social and emotional needs of pupils must be considered. Interestingly, all this is also the concern of the school librarian when trying to encourage higher and more complex levels of information literacy. Connections between working with gifted pupils and literacy improvement are often seen (Siegle, 2004). Gifted pupils in particular need a holistic approach: sometimes it is more important to have their social and emotional needs in mind compared to their cognitive abilities or other talents. They need to develop their social skills as much as they need additional training of their special gifts. Projects that last the entire school year can provide enrichment for gifted pupils. For work with gifted pupils, a holistic approach is very important. In addition to their cognitive skills, the social and emotional needs of pupils must be considered. Interestingly, all this is also the concern of the school librarian when trying to encourage higher and more complex levels of information literacy. Connections between working with gifted pupils and literacy improvement are often seen (Siegle, 2004). Gifted pupils in particular need a holistic approach: sometimes it is more important to have their social and emotional needs in mind compared to their cognitive abilities or other talents. They need to develop their social skills as much as they need additional training of their special gifts. Yearlong projects based on inquiry activities have the potential to meet all these needs. Information literacy, which has an important role in such projects, is a very complex skill set. An improvement in information literacy can mean an improvement in many areas. The benefits of improving information literacy go beyond reaching new knowledge and the improvement of information search strategies. Pupils also develop personally and socially (Moore, 2002; Oberg, 2004; Kuhlthau, 2010; Repinc & Južnič, 2011), and take better advantage of learning opportunities. Learning experiences based on extends projects are always challenging for mentors as well since “serendipity, intuition, and experimentation are essential components” (O’Connor, 2009, p.79) in a demanding information seeking process. These components must be combined with curiosity, persistence, and patience to achieve the desired impact.

Gifted pupils should learn to cope with feelings of uncertainty (Goodhew, 2009). How can they learn this if not through teamwork in which their mentors also confront similar feelings? Pupils appreciate librarians’ (as well as other mentors’) help not only in finding information but also in learning how to analyze and synthesize information to express ideas in their own words (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005). Pupils cannot be left alone after finding the information: the librarian can guide them toward knowledge creation, knowledge dissemination, knowledge use, and the development of information values.

Kuhlthau and Todd’s research into effective inquiry learning indicates that it must be guided and that the key is in the interventions provided by the teachers and library team. “Guided Inquiry is carefully planned, closely supervised targeted intervention…through curriculum based inquiry units that build deep knowledge and deep understanding of a curriculum topic, and gradually lead towards independent learning” (Kuhlthau & Todd, 2007, para. 2). The concept of guided inquiry is based on studies of the Information Search Process model, a model that is useful in the current information environment (Kuhlthau, et al., 2008).
Implementing guided inquiry into school curricula can be challenging. School librarians and other educators struggle to find time and effective methodologies for inquiry-based learning. School librarians, in collaboration with teachers, can use guided inquiry projects to promote information literacy skills. A culture of inquiry is strongly connected to constructivist learning theory (Gordon, 2010) and the constructivist approach to guided inquiry attempts to connect pupils’ experiences in school and outside school. Through an inquiry project, the school librarian contributes to a learning experience in which the primary concern is student learning, not just finding relevant information.

Many guided inquiry models describe a school librarian’s role in collaborative work with other professionals (Chu, et al., 2008; Kuhlthau, 2010; Kuhlthau, et al., 2007; Oberg, 2004; Repinc & Južnič, 2011). Each of these models includes at least three professionals who lead pupils through project activities and the models all stress that it is better if there are four or even more. Inquiry guides can include someone who is not a member of the school staff like a community member. A person who is not a teacher or school librarian can bring a fresh perspective to the project work and provide a bond between the school and the community. For projects like the one described in this paper, the team of professionals for the inquiry-based project should include a general studies teacher who is strongly connected to the project theme, a school librarian, an IT (information technology) teacher, and a language arts teacher as a minimum. In projects with gifted pupils, these roles can be quite flexible because the work is organized in time outside regular classes. The teachers (and other professionals) are therefore less constrained when forming an instructional team. Along with their professional fields and expertise, they can also consider their personal preferences, other knowledge they may have, hobbies, interests, and tacit knowledge. They can reasonably use all their skills in the project work. All these factors help mentors to meet pupils’ needs through the “Third Space” (Maniotes in Kuhlthau, 2010). The “Third Space” is the space where the pupils’ world (“First Space”) and the curriculum (“Second Space”) overlap. A yearlong project for gifted pupils is an option for a “third space” to be created in which mentors are supposed to “show pupils how and not just tell them how” (Todd, 2009).

Because an inquiry project involves teamwork, it is very important to understand the relationships and roles of the participants in a team to avoid potential misunderstandings. In long-term working relationships, the values of those involved become evident. Projects for gifted pupils as an enrichment activity are organized in time outside regular classes, so mentors are relatively free to choose to participate. Those who share certain values and who see the benefits of such work will persist (Repinc & Južnič, 2011). Collaboration is a difficult process, and shared thinking requires time and commitment (Montiel-Overall, 2010).

Demanding tasks such as working with gifted pupils require intensive collaboration and a lot of thinking together; only when collaborative planning occurs can the desired impact be achieved (Hartzell, 2002; Montiel-Overall, 2010). The results of the work can also gain the principal’s attention, which is very welcome since if a project has the principal’s support, it is more likely to be well accepted by others in the school community (Markless, 2009; Repinc & Južnič, 2011). Familiarity with the social dynamics within the school community is especially important for anyone who leads or coordinates a project. Intensive work with gifted pupils gives confidence to teachers and enhances their status among other professionals at a school.

Guided Inquiry Projects: Enrichment for Gifted Pupils

Repinc and Juznic
lack of support from one’s supervisor in schools appears to be a very significant factor affecting one’s self-perceived status (Hartzell, 2002). Furthermore, lack of support from administration sends a message about which aspects of a school are considered important (Sacco-Ritchie, 2011).

From the school librarian’s point of view, the theme of a project is not the most important element; more important are the experiences in the process and that each subsequent experience represent progress toward academic goals (Andretta, 2007). In this sense, the school librarian not only facilitates the pupils’ success in finding information but also their interaction with the information sources they find as a way of thinking, and encourages more complex thinking and a higher level of information literacy (Ritchie, 2011).

The implementation of guided inquiry requires connecting individuals and institutions, just as providing many programs for gifted pupils does in general. The school librarian naturally has to connect with many others in the course of daily activities. These experiences can lead to an initiating and coordinating role in a project such as the one the school librarian played in the case presented in this paper. In an inquiry project, the school librarian acts an agent of change (Gordon, 2007; 2010; Oberg, 2009; Mardis, 2009; Markless, et al, 2009; Montiel–Overall, 2005; 2010; Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005). The implementation of project activities and results also requires a lot of connecting with other institutions such as other libraries, museums, and tourist organizations as in the case of this study. Such connecting is also something that gifted pupils should do. Mentors should provide opportunities through which they can meet and work together, and it is recommended that the children be of different ages (Goodhew, 2009). These opportunities can give gifted pupils social experiences learning from one another and about how the results of joint work are a reflection of everyone’s contribution.

Gifted pupils need challenges and opportunities through which they can express their gifts and talents. This paper reports a study of the implementation of an inquiry-based project with gifted pupils led by a school librarian and organized outside of regular classes. This study addresses combines two main topics: 1) the school librarian’s attempts to raise information literacy through inquiry based projects and 2) the provision of programs for gifted students. The research was designed as typical practitioner research undertaken in the fields of practice in education. It was designed in such a way that practitioners could learn from their research into practice, which is not always the case in other forms of research. It aims equally on improving the educational practice as much as proving original hypothesis of usefulness of the guided inquiry model.

**Methodology**

**Research Questions**
Based on prior research that has suggested that guided inquiry is a promising method of teaching information skills and that gifted education can be a mutually rewarding and important undertaking, the current study was designed to explore these ideas through the following research questions:

1. What do effective models of inquiry for gifted students look like?
2. How does inquiry based project work affect school culture (gifted students, educators, school community and wider community)?

Participants
Gifted pupils from grades five through to nine were invited to join the project. In Slovenia, primary school lasts nine years and starts at age six, participating pupils ranged from 11 to 15 years old. Based on the models described by Chu, et al. (2008), Kuhlthau (2010), and Oberg (2004) and the librarian’s previous experience, the collaborative team included the following members as mentors:

1. The grade five class teacher who worked primarily with the group of younger pupils who had no previous experience with this kind of project;
2. The school librarian, who functioned as project coordinator – and is the researcher of the study;
3. The Information Technology (IT) teacher who also teaches geography;
4. The Slovenian language teacher, who also leads the journalism club; and
5. An outside professional who frequently works on tourist projects.

Research Context
The study took place in a Slovenian primary school during the 2011-2012 school year. This study will present a case study based on a description of one project for gifted pupils. Data were collected through observation, interviews with the educators (mentors, the principal), and a focus group of pupils and some pupils’ parents involved in the project. Open interview questions/topics were:

- What do you see in project work with gifted students?
- What is the school librarian’s role in this process?
- How does this work affect school aims (vision)?

The data were analyzed using Patton’s (2002) descriptive method.

Description of the Case
Slovenia is a small country in which tourism is important economic force (Konečnik 2006). For this reason, tourism organizations join with national school authorities to invite open applications for new and exciting tourism campaigns. These campaigns are presented every year at a competition festival called “Tourism and its Initiatives.” All primary schools are invited to join and participation is voluntary. While students have competed in the tourism festival before in activities that lasted an entire school year and were coordinated and led by the school librarian. However, prior projects did not use models for inquiry-based projects (Chu, et al, 2008; Chu, et al, 2011; Oberg, 2004; Kuhlthau, 2010).

Student tourism products are based on research assignments. The school librarian at a primary school in Bohinj, a tourist region, had considerable experience helping pupils do research assignments, realized it would be beneficial if the research assignments were part of a larger project, and saw the tourism competition festival as an opportunity. In addition to participating in the competition festival, the school’s tourist project was also aimed at
strengthening links between the school and the local community. Bohinj’s school and community leaders appreciated this focus on tourism, were very supportive of the students’ participation in the competition, and incorporated the project into the school’s annual plan. The International Wild Flower Festival is also held every May in Bohinj, and the school’s tourist products are also presented there. Students’ entries in the competition took both festivals are taken into account.

The theme of the festival is different every year, and for the 2011-2012 school year, it was “I like . . .” To begin developing campaigns based on this theme, school librarian assembled a team of teachers who expressed willingness to participate in the project. With several years of experience preparing students for the festival, the librarian was able to organize activity based on processes used in previous years. However, the project’s development was still very complex process since teachers’ duties and schedules, time, and available funds had to be considered. Getting students of such a wide range of grades to work together was also difficult. Given the diverse timetables involved, there were not many occasions when all the participants could meet at the same time. This fact called for clear communication and considerable coordination.

Once the participants were finalized and their schedules set, the practical work began. The librarian coordinator decided that all the participants should be present for the topic formulation phase. The first meeting involved mind mapping. Having in mind the International Wild Flower Festival and the “I like . . .” theme of the Tourism and its Initiatives festival, participants agreed on herbal plants in the Bohinj region because the area has many meadows, hills, and mountains where herbal plants grow. “They look nice, they smell nice, they can taste nice, and they are good for our health” was the mentor’s hint and the group chose “I like to lie in the grass” as the title for the project.

**Conducting the Inquiry**

The first task was to write joint text about tourism and herbal plants in Bohinj. Pupils gathered most information by surveying people. The questions in the survey were about herbal plants: where they grow, what they are used for, and stories about them. In the meantime, the younger pupils drew and painted herbal flowers. This method of data collection provided many opportunities for the student participants to talk to their grandparents and other older people in Bohinj villages.

The survey data gathered from villagers, the information gathered through additional research, and the work on terrain was presented to the older pupils and the other mentors who studied the results of the surveys, processed the results with graphs, and interpreted them. The most enthusiastic pupils from the higher classes gathered all the products (descriptions, pictures, graphs) and with the mentors’ help started to write a joint assignment. The next step was creative thinking about how to use all this material to present the beauty and healing power of Bohinj’s herbal plants to other pupils, to festival visitors, and to other Bohinj visitors and tourists in an attractive manner.
The geography and IT teacher guided the older pupils to create an eye-catching brochure with descriptions and drawings of herbal flowers and information on where they can be found. Since the older pupils came from different classes, they could rarely meet in person and therefore benefited from exploring the potentials of new IT methods to communicate.

**Presenting the Inquiry Products**

The first opportunity to present the pupils’ work to the general public was the “Tourism and its Initiatives” competition festival. The judges assessed the “Research assignment, Tourist stand” category featuring exhibitions prepared on the basis of research assignments. The pupils arranged their tourist stand as a mountain pasture cottage surrounded by fragrant grass decorated with herbal plants. They offered herbal tea and herbal bread and gave away their brochures. The Slovenian language teacher and mentor of the journalism club gave pupils advice on how to act and how to talk to visitors and journalists. The visitors could lie on the grass, smell the herbal plants in it, listen to sounds of nature, taste herbal bread, drink herbal tea, look at attractive pictures of Bohinj meadows, plants, and mountains, read the brochure, and talk to “tourist guides.”

The festival day turned out to be a rewarding experience for everyone involved, both children and mentors. Along with receiving the silver medal for their presentation, the pupils enjoyed seeing what other pupils from different parts of Slovenia had prepared and could talk to them and exchange experiences.

The pupils who were unable to attend the festival were promised future chances to participate in similar events. The next opportunity for sharing the results of their work with others was Earth Day in April when all the children in the school were assembled and the pupils showed off their work with a PowerPoint presentation and an exhibition in the school hall. In May there was another opportunity at the International Wild Flower Festival. The pupils manned the stand with their new products from the first day the festival opened. This year the festival was honored by the visit of the President of Slovenia, and the pupils who had the opportunity to show him their work were very proud. There were also other opportunities to present their work; for example, the Family Hotel in Bohinj redecorated some of their rooms using the pupils’ work and drawings, and the entire project inspired the hotel staff to offer herbal tea called “Joy of the Meadows” together with the brochure as a gift for their guests.

**Discussion**

Evaluation and assessment are very important in this form of research, and research findings provide further motivation, guidance, and input for improved work in future. The evidence demonstrates that project work based on inquiry activities is a good way of providing for gifted pupils. It offers an enrichment opportunity for them, the teachers involved, the entire school, and the local community. While it may sound easy how the project participants found opportunities for presenting the project’s outcomes, none of it would have been possible without the previous four experiences and the entire social network that was created through them. In terms of motivating pupils and finding opportunities to present their work, the first year was the most difficult.
The participants evaluated the year’s work and found numerous reasons for satisfaction. They were all pleased that, in spite of some hitches, the project was finished in time to be presented successfully on the planned occasions. The class teacher, who spent the most time with the youngest pupils, thought the children had learned a great deal about herbal plants and stressed that in the interview. Later these pupils made beautiful and appealing paintings that were subsequently displayed on souvenirs, in hotel rooms, and in brochures.

The school librarian who was also the coordinator was satisfied with the whole process. In the project with gifted pupils presented in this study, the mentors involved thought that the collaboration led by school librarian involved a considerable amount of their input and thought in every phase and that this was the key to the project’s success. As the initiator and coordinator, the school librarian was seen as a catalyst in improving the teaching and learning within the school community (Montiel-Overall, 2010). A lot of work was done in the reading room next to the library, and there were sufficient opportunities for information literacy training. Since the children got much of their information from older people and then augmented these data from other sources, there was an emphasis on evaluating information and deciding how to use it in a new joint text. While it is obvious that many children especially enjoy the final activities when they are presenting their work, the school librarian was pleased that the children became aware of the importance of starting activities early and that the initial activities were essential for the success of the project. The silver award at the competition festival was only one sign of successful work.

The geography and IT teacher, for whom the project was a new experience, found it very interesting how older pupils could enhance the work of younger pupils and help them with their experience. She has specifically stated in the interview that as a young teacher she saw an opportunity in the project to offer children more than she could in her regular classes. “Through this kind of work pupils can see that additional efforts are worthy”, she also said. During the phase of making a brochure, a new computer program was introduced to pupils.

The Slovenian language teacher, who is also a mentor of the journalism club, stated that she was happy with the pupils’ performance and about the fact that they had something concrete to report to the local media and their school e-paper. Her group of pupils was also busy presenting and interpreting the survey results, collected by younger pupils, with graphs.

The designer from outside the school visited the pupils and mentors occasionally. She finds this kind of work very welcome for tourist events and therefore enjoyed listening to the pupils’ ideas, offering suggestions, and if necessary helping practically, for example, by designing appropriate costumes for various occasions. In the interview she stressed the importance of connecting and sharing experiences. She shows this by being interested in and loyal to school projects year after year.

The parents were particularly pleased in initial phase because the pupils were interacting with older people in the community (asking them about wild herbal flowers). In the end they were proud to see their children at the events where they presented their work. The gifted pupils enjoyed participating in the project. They learned how to be persistent and task orientated. They judged some teachers as particularly effective in getting pupils to do their work and thought it especially important that no one was allowed to “hide” among the others and that everyone had to do their share. Most of the children expressed a desire to participate in
the project the following year and recognized the benefits of all the activities, which was the most gratifying part of the focus group part of the evaluation.

The school principal appreciated, in the interview, the fact that local cultural and natural heritage has been the theme of inquiry in all five projects and that the goal of children gaining knowledge about the local heritage and learning how to interpret, appreciate, and present their discoveries in an attractive way to various audiences (school community, local Bohinj people, Bohinj visitors, tourists, and peers from other schools) has again been achieved. Expectations were high enough to challenge everyone involved. If the project did not aim to be good at Competition Festival and at other occasions, participants would not have been so motivated.

As there were gifted pupils from eleven to fifteen years old in the presented project, the project mentors found that the work of the younger pupils was successfully enhanced by the work of the older ones. As expected, however, there were difficult moments for the mentors throughout the project as well. In one instance, for example, the class teacher was disappointed when she was faced with the fact that she didn’t get the necessary descriptions and surveys from all the children as quickly as she expected. With teenagers it isn’t always easy, and she faced the question of whether to lower her expectations or to persist in requesting that the materials be submitted. However, since the parents and other mentors helped motivate the pupils, the process didn’t suffer. The teacher took a serious approach to the work and was devoted to the project, and the coordinating librarian expressed deep appreciation of her commitment to the project. Only when hard work is invested can beautiful moments and satisfaction be expected. It is essential that team members trust each other so that in “bad” moments they can “comfort” each other, but it is not always like that. Competitive or manipulative relationships can develop in a team if the importance of good planning relative to clarifying everyone’s role as fully as possible is overlooked from the very beginning. The activities of all participants are summarized in Table 1.
Table 1. Educator role, pupil task, and activities in this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator Role</th>
<th>Pupil Task</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Searching opportunities to share project outcomes with appropriate audiences.</td>
<td>Define the topic in frame of open application.</td>
<td>Tourist assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide learning environment for teaching information literacy, ICT use in context of project theme – in the classroom, in the school library, outside.</td>
<td>Visit older people with surveys, searching for information elsewhere.</td>
<td>Tourist stand presented at different occasions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities for different groups of students to meet: to think together, to exchange working experiences, to be creative.</td>
<td>Creating new joint text.</td>
<td>Exhibitions in school hall and public library Redecoration of the hotel room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and advise pupils in their creative tasks.</td>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>Presentation (Earth Day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage time (have in mind all the important dates: Competition, Festival, Earth Day, etc.); Coordinate activities.</td>
<td>Thinking and deciding about the look of final products; creating these products.</td>
<td>Different touristic promotional products (booklet, paintings).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education professionals (principals, teachers, school librarians, etc.) determine the program for a school year on the basis of evidence. Todd (2002; 2009) distinguishes three types of evidence: evidence for practice, evidence in practice, and evidence of practice. In this particular case, the evidence for practice included the research literature about providing for gifted pupils and about knowledge construction, information literacy, the culture of inquiry, and teamwork.

Previous practical experience and the study of research literature, that is, evidence in practice, helped the coordinator of the project talk to other team members in a more informed and focused manner. In this case, finding examples of inquiry based project work as well as recent examples of providing for gifted pupils was very helpful.

The evidence of practice was the positive outcome that supported undertaking a similar project next year based on the success of the research assignment produced this year. Like several other research assignments from previous years, it had significant involvement from the school library and in the local public library. The pupils, school librarian, and other mentors were all very proud of their work together. From the school librarian’s point of view, this research assignment and exhibition were the strongest evidence of the pupils’ improvement in information literacy, which is additionally confirmed by the silver medal won at the national competition festival. The school principal was satisfied and supportive due to the pupils’ activities and collaboration with the local community. There is considerable evidence that the local community appreciated the project’s products. For example, the project’s products influenced the decoration of hotel rooms and their appearance at tourist stands during the International Wild Flower Festival and other occasions. The Earth Day presentation that shared the project’s results at the school was very valuable since other pupils were able to benefit from the project as well. Events when all the pupils are assembled to share their work experiences...
help build feelings of belonging and connection. Further evidence of practice that should be considered is related to documenting learning achievement and changes in the pupils’ values. The mentors shared concern for these elements and encouraged pupils to learn and grow by participating in the national competition festival. Finally, the creation of bonds between generations and the strengthening of bonds between the school and the local community through interaction achieved this year complete the basis for implementing the program in the future.

Conclusion

Projects based on inquiry activities are a good opportunity for a school librarian to take an active role alongside teachers in providing enhanced educational opportunities for gifted pupils. Through this kind of project, there is opportunity for creative and imaginative learning experiences. Teachers and school librarians share norms and values that promote children’s learning. The aim is to help gifted pupils learn to monitor and adjust their own performance; to become more self-reliant learners; and to cope with problems that may not have a clear solution. Inquiry activities allow the benefits of teaching information literacy to extend beyond constructing new knowledge. Pupils develop personally and socially, which improves their ability to benefit from responsive learning environments (Moore, 2002). The mentors involved can also benefit considerably through this kind of experience by, for example, learning new technology skills from one another and from pupils. Through collaborative teaching, a school librarian can demonstrate the importance of information literacy. School librarians show their interest in collaborating with teachers to develop the students’ leisure and academic interests to contribute to the overall excellence of the school (Mardis, 2009). Through this kind of work the school librarian also helps develop a positive school ethos that celebrates success and ensures that the social and emotional needs of pupils are met. Information literacy is a skill and a necessity for life-long sustainable learning that can be improved by involving mentors in complex projects for gifted pupils.

Motivating pupils to take on additional work is not easy, and this is probably the biggest challenge for teachers and school librarians who were involved in this project work. It is encouraging that successful project presentations provided motivation for involved pupils to join in coming years. Successes of this project depended upon project mentors who saw the benefits of guided inquiry learning opportunities and were motivated to take advantage of those opportunities. But what motivates the mentors? There is always the question of compensation, and some compensation should be provided for spending additional hours with gifted pupils. Perhaps more importantly, mentors are motivated by “fringe benefits” such as visiting interesting places with gifted pupils and improving teaching skills that may lead to promotion. As participation in projects for gifted pupils at the Bohinj primary school demonstrated, these activities can make the school year interesting, different, creative, and rich for all involved, particularly by exploring the local heritage, interpreting and seeing it from different points of view, and interacting with others in this context.

Our aim was also to adapt a theoretical model for successful and fruitful practitioners' research. Further research is needed to create new knowledge around implementing guided
curriculum and thereby to contribute to the growth of LIS as profession and as a discipline (Južnič & Urbanija 2003). While it was not the intent of this paper to examine the advantages of practitioner research, the results of this study suggest that practitioner research may help to add to an understanding of guided inquiry.

**References**


**Author Notes**

Urška Repinc is a school librarian at a Slovenian primary school and a doctoral student of Information Science at the Department of Library and Information Science and Book Studies of the University of Ljubljana Faculty of Arts.

Primož Južnič is an associate professor and the head of the Department of Library and Information Science and Book Studies of the University of Ljubljana Faculty of Arts.