

Whole-Grade Acceleration in Saudi Arabian Schools in the Light of the International Standards: What Does the Research Say?

Faisal Y. Alamiri, Ph.D

Department of Special Education, College of Education, University of Jeddah,
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
falamiri@uj.edu.sa

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the degree to which the whole-grade acceleration policy in Saudi Arabian context is consistent with the international standards as conducted by well-known institutions. Applying the quantitative research design through the analytical descriptive method and purposive sampling, the findings indicated that teachers of accelerated students were quite different in their responses to the principal factors of developing the effective acceleration policy. The overall findings posed critical questions about the gap between the written document of acceleration policy and its implementation in practice. A significant challenge emerged from the findings revolved around the inclusive aspects of acceleration policy in which all students, including those with twice exceptionality, have the opportunity to be nominated for the whole-grade acceleration. The findings brought important implications for developing research-based policies of academic acceleration and the need for evaluating the short-term and long-term effects of acceleration on students' development and career.

Keywords: Saudi Arabian policy, whole-grade acceleration, international standards.

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One of the most significant current discussions in gifted education is the intervention of academic acceleration for advanced learners. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in providing effective policies for guiding the implementation of acceleration options in the school context. Although the international policies of academic acceleration support the whole types of acceleration as collaboratively developed by well-known institutions (Lupkowski-Shoplik et al., 2018), there is an increasing concern among policy makers, researchers, and educators about the integration of acceleration within the mainstream educational policies and practices. In particular, questions have been raised about the policies of whole-grade acceleration in which students are allowed to shorten the number of their study years in the K-12 system and study a full-time in a higher grade level and at ages younger than usual. Therefore, the gap between policies and practices has posed a challenge to many researchers who have consistently showed that some challenges students face during their accelerated intervention could be traced to the ways of implementing such policies, not to the students' ability or personality, especially when students have successfully assessed and became eligible for this type of acceleration (Brodersen et al., 2023; Colangelo et al., 2004; Davis & Rimm, 2004; Lupkowski-Shoplik et al., 2022).

In Saudi Arabian context, the official policy of education approved by the Council of Ministers in 1969 acknowledged the value of providing excellent programs for meeting the needs of gifted and talented students (Ministry of Education, 1995). In spite of the early interest in gifted education, the policy of the whole-grade acceleration (i.e., Grade-Skipping) was developed and implemented in the Saudi educational system throughout the year of 2014. The policy provides twice opportunities for students who are eligible for this type of acceleration; one opportunity in the primary school (from 4th class to 6th class), and another opportunity in the intermediate school (from 1st intermediate class to the 3rd intermediate class) (Alarfaj & Al-Omair, 2020). The Ministry of Education only adopts the whole-grade acceleration as the type of grade-based acceleration.

Researchers in Saudi Arabia have raised a critical concern about the standards that underpin the development of the acceleration policy and the criteria that are utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of such policy (Alamer & Phillipson, 2022; Alarfaj & Al-Omair, 2020; Alfaiz et al., 2022; Aljughaiman et al., 2016). It seems that the current policy of academic acceleration in Saudi educational context is rarely reinforced by the best standards in this field. In other words, research-based policies of acceleration are often underestimated, and this issue has been frequently cautioned by many educational experts (e.g., Brodersen et al., 2023; Roberts, & Plucker, 2022; Robinson et al., 2007).

Having reviewed the policy of whole-grade acceleration in Saudi schools, it became obvious that the policy targets students who have been assessed as being among the top 2% of their age peers based on the results of the national program for gifted identification which conducted by King Abdul-Aziz and his Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity “Mawhiba” in partnership with the Ministry of Education (Mawhiba, 2024). Students are required to pass the identification criteria (i.e., Multiple Intellectual Abilities Test, and the Behavioral Characteristics Scale) to be identified as ‘gifted’, which is the initial nomination for the acceleration. In this situation, the current study raises the question of whether the policy of academic acceleration is merely for the identified gifted students; what about other populations?, such as students with disabilities, and students who don’t have the opportunity to register for the national identification program or participating in the school gifted programs. This issue has been criticized by the international policy of developing academic acceleration which distinctly highlights that “the acceleration policy should clearly state that participation in a school’s gifted education program is not a prerequisite for consideration of academic acceleration for a student” (Lupkowski-Shoplik et al., 2018, p. 8).

As a result, the significance of this study in research is definitive for advancing knowledge and addressing the need for developing the effective acceleration policy in Saudi Arabian context based on the evidence-based standards and best practices. Also, the current study seeks to draw the policy makers’, researchers’, and educators’ attention to the required evaluation for examining the implementation process of acceleration policy based on such standards. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to explore the degree to which the whole-grade acceleration policy in Saudi Arabian schools is consistent with the international standards as conducted by well-known institutions (i.e., Acceleration Institute at Belin-Blank Center, National Association for Gifted Children, and Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted). The study is guided by the following question:

To what extent does the whole-grade acceleration policy in Saudi Arabian schools concur with the international standards for developing such policy?

Academic Acceleration Policy and International Overview

Acceleration is defined as “progress through an educational program at rates faster or at ages younger than conventional” (Pressey, 1949, p. 2). This is the most comprehensive definition which has been acknowledged by many researchers (e.g., Davis & Rimm, 2004; Vialle & Rogers, 2009). According to the official international policies for academic acceleration (Lupkowski-Shoplik et al., 2018), acceleration can be categorized into two major groups: grade-based and content-based acceleration. The grade-based acceleration is defined as the strategy for “shorten the number of years a student spends in the K-12 system” (Lupkowski-Shoplik et al., 2018, p. 9),

and includes three types; early entrance to school, whole-grade acceleration, and early entrance to college. Whereas the content-based acceleration is defined as the strategy for “allowing students to work on higher grade-level instruction in their regular classrooms in lieu of grade-level instruction” (Lupkowski-Shoplik et al., 2018, p. 10), and includes different types; single-subject acceleration, curriculum compacting, dual enrollment, credit by examination, Advanced Placement program, International Baccalaureate program, and talent search programs. In general, it can be stated that grade-based acceleration focuses on the time by reducing the length of time required to complete the school years, whereas the content-based acceleration focuses on the depth and advanced knowledge of curriculum and instruction of the regular grade.

Moreover, the evidence-based “checklist for a whole-grade acceleration policy” as outlined by Lupkowski-Shoplik et al. (2018, p.15) involved five essential principles for developing an effective acceleration policy:

- Is the policy characterized by accessibility, equity, and openness?
- Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines for implementing whole-grade acceleration?
- Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines on administrative matters?
- Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines for preventing non-academic barriers?
- Does the acceleration policy include features that prevent unintended consequences?

Particularly, it became obvious that the checklist provides an inclusive perspective for serving the whole population of students including those with disabilities or those with different culture and language background. This principle is reinforced by evidence for the importance of applying the gifted education practices to meet the diverse abilities and needs of all students (Borland, 2005; Dai & Chen 2013; Eyre, 2011; Lo & Porath, 2017; Tomlinson, 2014). Considering acceleration as the intervention for the identified gifted students or for the schools that have gifted programs is a controversial perspective.

In addition, multiple assessments for measuring different aspects of abilities including cognitive, social-emotional, and developmental domains are essential for developing an effective acceleration policy (Lupkowski-Shoplik et al., 2018). It can be understood that high academic performance and intellectual abilities of students are not sufficient to accelerate them to the higher grades. This matter is one of the misconception of acceleration as reported by many researchers who advocate for the social and emotional development as the whole framework for defining the students’ abilities in addition to their cognitive and intellectual abilities (Davis & Rimm, 2004; Lupkowski-Shoplik et al., 2022; Neihart, 2007; Rinn, 2024; Peters et al., 2014). Thus, the integration among the different abilities of students can increase their adaptability to the higher-grade classes, especially when those students study with older peers.

Literature pertaining to the whole-grade acceleration indicates the beneficial effects of acceleration on students' academic and personal development. Many educational experts have argued convincingly that the shortcoming of acceleration and its provoked issues like the psychological issues are a consequence of the existing barriers that affects students (Colangelo et al., 2004; Bernstein et al., 2020; Lupkowski-Shoplik et al., 2018; Rogers, 2015). Accelerating students in a higher-grade level is not sufficient without facilitating the learning environment and providing the required modifications and provisions that ensure the progress of students (Colangelo et al., 2004; Nicholas et al., 2024; Peters et al., 2014). Hence, it can be argued that the acceleration policy becomes more effective when the barriers for implanting the acceleration were prevented.

Academic Acceleration in Saudi Arabia

The Ministry of Education offers the whole-grade acceleration to the students in primary and intermediate schools. Alarfaj and Al-Omair (2020) provide an extensive analysis of the whole-grade acceleration policy in Saudi educational system. As they mentioned, the ministry provides a clear written document of the policy which includes the assessment criteria and procedures for nominating and selecting the accelerated students, identifying the supervisory committees, and providing the general guidelines with a precise timeline for nominations and implementation. What distinguished the acceleration policy in Saudi Arabia from other policies is that the decision for accelerating the students to the higher-grade level is approved by the higher authority of the Ministry of Education. This situation could increase the responsibility and accountability of the school administration and the supervisory committees in one hand, and ensure the validity and significance of the acceleration on the other.

It has been reported that the number of gifted students who were accelerated to the higher-grade classes is very limited (Alarfaj & Al-Omair 2020). During the school year of 2019, the total number of gifted students who participated in a variety of gifted programs (e.g., acceleration, enrichment, self-contained classes) in Saudi Arabia is 45,093 (Ministry of Education, 2019). According to Alfaiz et al. (2022), "in the school year 2019-2020, approximately 0.01% of total students in the Ministry of Education were accelerated" (p., 19). It can be noticed that the statistics of accelerated students targeted those students who were identified as 'gifted' based on the national identification program as previously mentioned in this study.

It has been found that the limited number of accelerated students in Saudi schools is a result of the accurate assessment of acceleration (Alarfaj & Al-Omair 2020). By contrast, it can be argued that the limited number can be traced to the limited population of students who are targeted by the acceleration policy. The policy is limited for 'gifted' students who are required to pass the

measures of the national identification program of gifted students. Importantly, Alarfaj and Al-Omair (2020) highlighted some recommendations to overcome the challenges of the Saudi's acceleration policy, and such recommendations included the need to increase awareness among school community, empowering the student's team members students, and supporting teachers' profession in gifted education.

At the same time, previous research discussed the academic acceleration in Saudi Arabian context concentrated more of the identified 'gifted' students, and thereby they often overlooked the paradigm of inclusive education whereby all learners have the opportunity to be accelerated based on their developmental level. This argument concurs with the Dare and Nowicki's study (2023) who utilized the term "students with high ability" instead of the term "gifted" (p. 189). The authors affirmed that, like Colangelo et al. (2010), the term high ability meshes well with the inclusive school principles and opens doors for students to have the acceleration opportunity without pre-determined label, classification, and identification.

Additionally, accelerating students in some Saudi schools has beneficial effects on their academic, social, and emotional development (Aboud, 2018). It seems that, however, this argument focused often on assessing the short-term benefits. Put another way, longitudinal studies for examining the long-term effects of acceleration on students' career seem to be overlooked in all almost all research studies undertaken in Saudi Arabia.

Method

The study employed a quantitative research design which includes the analytical descriptive method. This method is useful for collecting and categorizing the data with the aim of drawing meaningful conclusions and then summarizing the phenomena of the study (Creswell, 2012).

Participant Sample

This study was conducted among a sample of 90 teachers (50 % male, 50% female) who have more than five years of experience in working with the accelerated gifted students in several Saudi Arabian primary schools. The teachers were intentionally nominated from three different educational departments in the regions of Riyadh, Makkah, and Eastern Region. Table (1) demonstrates the distribution of the sample by gender and regions.

Table 1: Distribution of The Study Sample

Participants	Riyadh	Makkah Provence	Eastern Provence	Repetition	Total	Percentage
Male (M)	15	15	15	45	90	50.0%

Female (F)	15	15	15	45		50.0%
						100.0%

Data Source

Quantitative source of data included a questionnaire which was based on the *Checklist For A Whole-Grade Accelerations Policy* developed by international institutions as previously aforementioned. The study focused merely on the quantitative part of the checklist to explore the degree to which the participants’ perception serve the purpose. The questionnaire or checklist was translated from English language into Arabic language by the researcher. Initial revision of the translated Arabic version was conducted by two researchers who were fluent in both languages. Then, the Arabic version was reviewed by another bilingual researcher who conducted a comparison process between the English and Arabic versions to ensure the reliability of the Arabic version. As a result, some minor changes on the Arabic version were carried out without affecting the meaning and understanding of each phrase on the original checklist.

Reliability

Item-total correlation method was utilized to determine its internal consistency. By this method, The Pearson correlation coefficient between the items scores and factor scores were calculated to determine the degree to which each item belongs to each factor. The results of that are shown in table (2).

Table 2: Item-Factors Correlations

Factor 1: Is the policy characterized by accessibility, equity, and openness?					
Item	Correlation coefficient	Item	Correlation coefficient	Item	Correlation coefficient
1	.770**	3	.753**	5	.575**
2	.699**	4	.455*	6	.672**
Factor 2: Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines for implementing whole-grade acceleration?					
1	.720**	3	.754**	5	.703**
2	.630**	4	.682**		
Factor 3 : Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines on administrative matters?					
1	.713**	2	.623**		
Factor 4: Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines for preventing non-academic barriers?					
1	.821**	2	.717**		
Factor 5: Does the acceleration policy include features that prevent unintended consequences?					
1	.627**	2	.736**		

**Statistical significance level (0.01), *Statistical significance level (0.05)

From Table (2), it can be seen that the correlation coefficients between items and related factors have statistically significant at the level (0.01), and all correlation coefficients have high values.

To illustrate, the correlation coefficients of the first factor ranges between (.455% - .770%), the second factor ranges between (.630% - .754%), the third factor ranges between (.623% - .713%); the fourth factor ranges between (.717% - .821%), and in the fifth factor arranges between (.627% - .736%). This situation indicates that there is a high level of internal consistency among the items of the questionnaire's factors. With respect to the construct reliability of the questionnaire, it is verified by finding the correlation coefficients between the total score of each factor and the total score of the questionnaire. The results of that can be shown in table (3).

Table 3: Construct Reliability of the Questionnaire

The Factor	Correlation Coefficient
Is the policy characterized by accessibility, equity, and openness?	.880**
Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines for implementing whole-grade acceleration?	.812**
Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines on administrative matters?	.822**
Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines for preventing non-academic barriers?	.883**
Does the acceleration policy include features that prevent unintended consequences?	.834**

**Statistical significance level (0.01)

The table (3) demonstrates that the correlation coefficient values of the total score of each factor with the total score of the questionnaire are very high, ranging from (. 883% - 822%), and all of which are statistically significant with a significant level (0.01). This situation shows the high level of the constructive authenticity of the questionnaire. As shown in table (4), Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients was also used to measure the reliability or consistency of the questionnaire's factors. From table (4) above, it is clear that the consistency coefficient values of each factor are very high, ranging from (. 774 % to 853 %), whereas the total consistency coefficient values of the factors are (.827%). These values indicates that the questionnaire is more reliable and applicable which reflects the reliability of its results.

Table 4: Factor Reliability Coefficients

Factor	Number of Items	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Is the policy characterized by accessibility, equity, and openness?	6	.853
Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines for implementing whole-grade acceleration?	5	.835
Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines on administrative matters?	2	.843
Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines for preventing non-academic barriers?	2	.892
Does the acceleration policy include features that prevent unintended consequences?	2	.774

Total	17	.827
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Findings and Discussion

To answer the study question, the arithmetic mean and standard deviation of each item or phrase of the first factor were calculated, and then the phrases were arranged in descending order based on the arithmetic mean as shown in table (5). According to the table (5), the most striking findings to emerge from the data is that participants expressed different views about the appropriateness of the current whole-grade acceleration policy in Saudi schools in accordance with the international standards. Their different responses revealed high scores in all almost all the questionnaire's factors and its phrases. To illustrate, the overall average of the first factor's phrases was between (3.14 - 4.16) and the standard deviation was between (.745 - 1.03), which showed a high value, and this indicated that the participants' responses of such phrases were different. It can be seen from the table (5) that the phrase number (2) was on the first order among other phrases, whereas the phrase number (6) was on the last order. The overall data regarding the accessibility, equity, and openness of acceleration policy in Saudi Arabian context provoked a significant difference among participants.

Table (5): Analysis of Participants' Responses and Study Findings

1. Is the policy characterized by accessibility, equity, and openness?									
Question		Response				Average	Standard Deviation	Phrase Order	Degree of Response
		Percentage	Yes	No	Under Consideration				
1	Is access to referral for consideration of acceleration open to all students regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, disability status, socioeconomic status, Arabic language proficiency, school building attended, and previous acceleration?	Repetition	58	27	5	3.62	.930	2	High
		percentage	64.4	30.0	5.6				
2	Are all student populations served, including English learners, at-risk, low socioeconomic status, profoundly gifted, and twice exceptional?	Repetition	48	36	6	3.14	1.03	1	High
		percentage	53.3	40.0	6.7				
3	Is the process of student evaluation fair, objective, and systematic?	Repetition	58	22	10	4.16	.841	5	High
		percentage	64.4	24.4	1.2				
4	Does the policy specify a comprehensive data-informed student evaluation plan that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses multiple valid and reliable instruments to assess 	Repetition	62	26	12	3.84	.876	3	High

	cognitive, social-emotional, and developmental domains? • includes a parent report and teacher observations of the student's knowledge, skills and abilities?	percentage	68.8	28.8	2.4				
5	Are channels of communication among parents/legal guardians, school officials, and/or students clearly delineated and available in an accessible format?	Repetition	70	12	8	3.92	.873	4	High
		percentage	77.7	13.3	9.0				
6	Does the community have access to the policy document? Is the policy accessible in the languages served by the school?	Repetition	64	27	9	4.02	.745	6	High
		percentage	71.1	30.0	1.0				
2. Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines for implementing whole-grade acceleration?									
7	Is the process for consideration of acceleration clearly outlined: a. awareness of options b. referral & screening c. assessment & decision making d. planning for acceleration implementation e. alternative options for students who are not good candidates for whole-grade acceleration	Repetition	66	20	4	3.55	.830	5	High
		percentage	73.3	22.2	4.5				
8	Are the appropriately qualified professionals involved in determining the process for referral, screening, assessment, etc., identified?	Repetition	58	21	11	3.14	1.01	1	High
		percentage	64.4	23.3	12.3				
9	Does the policy specify that child study teams, not individuals, consider acceleration cases?	Repetition	61	19	10	4.16	.841	4	High
		percentage	67.8	21.1	11.1				
10	Does the policy specify the creation and long-term record-keeping of a "Written Acceleration Plan"?	Repetition	68	19	3	3.84	.876	2	High
		percentage	75.6	21.1	3.3				
11	Does the policy specify a monitored transition period with adequate supports in place to increase the likelihood of success?	Repetition	70	12	8	3.92	.873	3	High
		percentage	77.8	13.3	8.9				
3. Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines on administrative matters?									
12	Does the policy address short-term issues, such as: • specifying which grade level achievement test the student should take? • Indicates who is responsible for monitoring the acceleration, including academic and social-emotional aspects.	Repetition	65	22	3	3.83	.830	2	High
		percentage	72.2	24.4	3.4				
13	Does the policy address long-term needs, such as: • Maintaining accelerated standing throughout the K-12 years? • Determining student class rank?	Repetition	48	36	6	3.39	.894	1	High
		percentage	53.3	40.0	6.7				
4. Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines for preventing non-academic barriers?									
14	Are procedures in place to ensure participation in extracurricular activities, including sports?	Repetition	63	23	4	3.34	.840	2	High
		percentage	64.4	25.5	4.5				

15	Have funding formulae been reviewed to prevent unintended disincentives?	Repetition	65	20	5	3.80	.892	1	High
		percentage	72.2	22.2	5.6				
5. Does the acceleration policy include features that prevent unintended consequences?									
16	Is an appeals process detailed?	Repetition	75	12	3	3.62	.854	1	High
		percentage	83.3	13.3	3.4				
17	Will the policy be regularly evaluated for its effectiveness?	Repetition	40	32	18	3.14	.812	2	High
		percentage	44.4	35.6	20.0				
The total arithmetic mean of participants' perception about the application of the academic acceleration policy							3.82	.821	High

In relation to the second factor; ‘Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines for implementing whole-grade acceleration?’, the overall average value of the phrases arranged between (3.14 - 4.16), and the standard deviation arranged between (.841 and 1.01), which showed a high value. For the seventh phrase with the calculated average (3.55) and the standard deviation (.830), participants expressed different views about the process of implementing the acceleration policy in Saudi schools. In relation to the third factor; “Does the acceleration policy provide guidelines on administrative matters?”, the overall average value of phrases arranged between (3.39-3.83) and the standard deviation value of the phrases arranged between (.830 - .894), which is a high value. For the fourth factor’s phrases, the overall average arranged between (3.34 - 3.80) and the standard deviation value of the phrase is between (.840 - .892), which is a high value. In the fifth factor’s phrases, the overall average value arranged between (3.14 - 3.62) and the standard deviation arranged between (.812 - .854), which is a high value. The present findings of the study must be interpreted with caution due to the small number of participants. At first glance, the different views of participants brought a controversial argument to determine the degree to which the implementation process of the Saudi acceleration policy met the international standards of the whole-grade acceleration policy. The different views of participants implied the challenging aspects of the written acceleration policy in Saudi educational system. As expected, the most critical question posed by the findings is whether the written acceleration policy included the population of students with disabilities. Participants differently perceived the matter of accessibility, equity, and openness of acceleration policy, but the findings, based on the acceleration policy checklist, did not precisely distinguish the population of students with disability from other populations or other factors such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status. It is true that these factors have different implications depending on the cultural context or educational system of each country, but there has been a consistent

agreement on the need to provide an inclusive acceleration policy for the diverse students including those with disability or twice exceptionality (Colangelo et al., 2010; Dare & Nowicki, 2023; Lupkowski-Shoplik et al., 2018).

In addition, the findings highlighted further challenges regarding the accessibility, equity, and openness of the whole-grade acceleration policy in Saudi Arabian context. One of the most challenging aspects was the lack of accurate assessment for measuring the social-emotional and developmental capabilities of students, and this issue has been consistently reported by many researchers (Davis & Rimm, 2004; Lupkowski-Shoplik et al., 2022; Neihart, 2007; Rinn, 2024; Peters et al., 2014). What can be noticed from the findings is that high intellectual and cognitive abilities of students based on the tests' score may obscure the assessment of their social-emotional skills for the whole-grade acceleration in one hand, and limit the diversity of students' population on the other. In other words, the traditional measures of gifted students to nominate them for the academic acceleration as commonly used in the Saudi schools are not often appropriate for other students such as those with disabilities. This is one of the factors influencing the openness and accessibility of such policy.

The findings found that the majority of respondents were consistent in their support for the guidelines of acceleration policy whether for implementing whole-grade acceleration or for administrative matters or for preventing non-academic barriers. The findings matched with those obtained by Alarfaj and Al-Omair (2020) in which the written documents of whole-grade acceleration in Saudi Arabian context provided clear guidelines including the awareness phase, assessment and identification process, planning and timelines, specialized teams and their roles, and monitoring the accelerated students. It can be stated that the clear guidelines might be traced to the approval requirement for the written document of acceleration policy by the Ministry of Education.

The findings drew attention to the issue of determining the long-term of acceleration throughout the student's path to increase their success in higher-grade level, and this issue has been found in the literature (e.g., Davis & Rimm, 2004; Lupkowski-Shoplik et al., 2022; Robinson et al., 2007; Peters et al., 2014). It appears that the acceleration guidelines in Saudi Arabian schools did not provide clear instructions for what students need in their accelerated classrooms such as the types of curriculum content and activities. It is evident that accelerating students to higher-grade level is not sufficient, unless adequate provisions (e.g., teachers' profession, pedagogy, and counselling services) for meeting the academic and social-emotional needs of students are determined before taking the decision of acceleration.

Another significant finding related to the obscurity of the appeals process in the acceleration policy in Saudi Arabian context. This finding corroborates the views of Peters et al. (2014) who suggested that the appeals process should be clearly outlined with indicating the role of parents. Importantly, the findings sheds light on the question of the effect of appeals process on students' achievement and social-emotional development, and this matter was rarely reinforced by empirical evidence in the literature. Therefore, the most striking observation to emerge from the findings was the question on which the Saudi policy of acceleration is regularly evaluated for measuring its outcomes and effectiveness on students' achievement, and social-emotional development, and importantly how parents involves in the evaluation process.

The overall review of findings indicated that there is a noticeable gap between the written guidelines of acceleration policy in and its implementation in practice. The written documents of Saudi acceleration policy is likely to be appropriate to some aspects of the international standards, but the critical discussion revolves around the question of openness, equity, and accessibility of acceleration and its evaluation for the short and long-term impacts on students' development.

Implication and Direction For Future Research

The findings of present study has important implications for developing research-based policy for the whole-grade acceleration in Saudi Arabian educational context. So, there is a need for conducting a comprehensive research to evaluate the effectiveness of current acceleration policy in meeting the evidence-based standards in one hand, and meeting the diverse needs of accelerating students on the other. Greater parent involvement in the evaluation process needs to be sought by the policy makers and school administration. What requires much more attention is the inclusive policy of acceleration in which all students, including twice exceptional students, have the opportunity to be nominated for the whole-grade acceleration. In this case, the current criteria for nominating the identified 'gifted' students for the acceleration needs to be reviewed in order to provide alternative criteria for nominating twice exceptional students. In future studies it might be possible to conduct a longitudinal research to investigate the long-term impact of acceleration on students' academic, social-emotional skills, and their preparation for the labor and employment requirements.

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