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# Mentorship and Ability Grouping as Barometers of Socio-cognitive Well-being among High-ability Students in Ibadan, Nigeria

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## Abstract

*This study examines the barometers of mentorship and ability grouping to social and cognitive well-being among students with superior academic performance in Ibadan, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design of correlational type. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting schools in Ido and Ibadan Southwest Local Government Areas of Ibadan, with a total number of 215 high-ability students. Instruments utilized were: English Language and Mathematics Screening Test, Slosson Intelligence Test Revised Third Edition for Children and Adults (SIT-R3), Socio-cognitive Well-being Scale ( $r = 0.84$ ), Mentoring Relationship Scale ( $r = 0.91$ ) and Ability Grouping Scale ( $r = 0.78$ ). Data were analysed, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis. Mentorship points to the high-ability students' socio-cognitive well-being ( $r = 0.641$ ,  $n = 215$ ,  $p(0.0001) < 0.05$ ), ability group is also a pointer to socio-cognitive well-being among the students ( $r = 0.591$ ,  $n = 215$ ,  $p(0.0001) < 0.05$ ) while a joint contribution of mentorship and ability grouping to the socio-cognitive well-being of the students is also established ( $F(1, 212) = 87.686$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Mentorship and ability grouping have been advocated for inclusion into the existing curriculums as all relevant stakeholders in the study have been recommended to.*

**Keywords:** Mentorship, ability grouping, socio-cognitive well-being, high-ability students

## Introduction

The unique social and learning needs of high-ability students require adequate attention in order to meet their interests and cater for their cognitive endowments. Social issues usually emanate from the children's relationship with their peers as a result of acceleration benefits or enrichment programmes. High-ability students who enjoy grade skipping, or a situation where such learners are provided with special materials for educational advancement could trigger some unwarranted reactions among their classmates. At the same time, educational provisions conforming to the instructional convention are believed not to meet the exceptional curiosity of these learners. The foregoing observations point to probable social deprivation and obstructed intellectual exploration among the students in our regular school system. Therefore, the significant role of socialization in bringing about positive changes cannot be over-emphasized in this direction. It has been reported that school has great importance in the successful implementation of socialization of every child (Crisogen, 2015).

Effective socialization is given through the use of socializing actions based on age and individual peculiarities by the school (Peter and Alison, 2005). This indicates that high-ability students' social issues have to be taken into account if their learning experiences will be worth the while. Therefore, social well-being of the students is pivotal for their education. According to Salehi, Marzban, Sourosh,

Sharif, Nejabat and Imanieh (2016), social well-being plays an effective role in improving the quality of life, social efficacy and performance as well as an important factor demonstrating the circumstance and functioning of the society. Social well-being of students recognized for superior abilities is an undeniable variable, which contributes immensely to their significant academic progress in school and overall functioning in the society. Hidayah, Pali, Ramli and Hanurawan (2016) remark that students' social well-being is essential for the school as a result of its remarkable influence towards learning process and outcome.

Students noted for high accomplishments in school feel satisfied with their studies when they are socially balanced. The students' learning is better facilitated and enhanced when their social needs are met. In general, Keyes and Lopez (2002) argue that students' social well-being consists of five dimensions of social acceptance, actualization, contribution, coherence and integration. Social well-being among students, as observed by Carruthers and Hood (2004) involves feeling that they are part of the society and have contributions to make to the society. It could be, therefore, established that high-ability students have a dynamic role to play to better the lots of the society if their social well-being is improved upon. In the words of Teghe and Rendell (2005), social well-being revolves around standard of living, personal health, life achievements, personal relations, personal safety, community connection and



future security. High-ability students who enjoy the above will, no doubt, make academic gains. However, it should be noted that high-ability students' cognitive well-being is as important as their social wellness.

Students with exceptional abilities are usually marked out in the school system because of their excellent and outstanding academic performance. Vaivre-Douret (2011) confirms that intelligence quotient is widely agreed upon in the identification of high-level potentialities. However, achievement test is tremendously considered in the definition of high-ability students. The academic abilities of these learners centre on their cognitive development. The students' intellectual properties are richer and more vibrant than the others who are average and low achievers in school: Such cognitive development and enrichment makes the differentiation of their learning activities mandatory. The unique cognitive needs of the learners call for catering for their learning curiosity. Adedun (2017) emphasizes that high-ability students require special educational provisions in order to cater for cognitive well-being via the school curricula. Such differentiated educational programmes and services are bound to address the learning styles and challenge the students' performance levels in great measures.

From the above submissions, socio-cognitive needs of the students would require enrichment strategies. Such instructional packages are to be explored in the process of meeting the high-ability students' intellectual functioning since they are more advanced in the cognitive prowess than their mates. Ozoji, Unachulwu and Kolo (2016) clarify that the teacher could enrich the students' learning through additional reading assignments which involve extra literature books. Meyer, Haywood, Sachdev and Faraday (2008) note that enriched skills enhance motivation and confidence of high-ability students. Therefore, meeting the unique cognitive needs of the students require enriched learning models. Such enrichment packages positively impacts on the learning preferences of the learners. One major enrichment option that could be used to foster cognitive as well as social well-being of high-ability students is mentorship.

As an enrichment strategy, mentorship involves the use of mentors. Uyanwa and Aikomo (2004) establish that mentors are professionals or experts in different fields of life with whom high-ability learners can relate with as equals to ease some of their academic-related problems. Such veterans offer guidance and inspirations to the students,

because their outstanding contributions in their areas of specialization and community are known by the students. This understanding enables the student mentees to open up to their mentors. Wong and Premkumar (2007) remark that mentees develop and learn through conversations with more experienced mentors, who share knowledge and skills that can be incorporated into their thinking and practice. Mentoring relationships therefore better the level of social and cognitive wellness of high-ability students because superior knowledge and skills gained from their interactions with experts are rich enough to help them adjust socially and improve intellectually.

A master-apprentice relationship, mentorship is a special educational process for training and supporting high-ability students (Clasen and Clasen, 2003; Grassinger, Porath and Ziegler, 2010). Mentorship is an effective strategy in offering emotional and academic benefits for high-ability students of all age groups (Cakir and Kocabas, 2016). Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2015) views the concept as the process by which high-ability students' ideas, skills, opinions and emotions are fully learnt while spending time with teachers, or professionals who are their mentors. Meyer (2006) observes that mentoring relationship transcends duty and obligation and often involves coaching, networking, sponsoring and career counselling. Submissions by MoNE (2015) and Meyer (2006) above provide evidence that mentorship is a learned partnership that is co-created by the mentor and the mentee. Therefore, mentorship as a powerful professional development tool is an effective way to helping high-ability students' progress in their social life, educational pursuit and career planning.

Yirci, Ozalp and Kocabas (2018) have found that mentors with successful professional history value the success of their mentees. Experienced mentors, as role models, provide acceptance and encouragement, act as a source of wisdom, support professional development, challenge and encourage the mentees in order to support their development and enjoy sharing their wisdom with the mentees (American Psychological Association (APA), 2006). It is evident that mentorship is an idea-sharing relationship between a professional teacher/expert and high-ability mentee(s). Resultantly, effective listening, good communication skills and the ability to understand the needs of the students are attributes of ideal mentors. Hascher, Cocard and Moser (2004) have confirmed that effective mentors provide emotional



and psychosocial support to the mentees. Based on the socio-cognitive needs of high-ability students, teacher mentors as well as other relevant professionals help them to explore areas of educational interest that foster their relationships with peers and adults.

It has been reported that the mentoring programmes for high-ability students offer an educational alternative that attempts to provide the learners with a cognitive stimulus and a safe place to experience positive emotions and good relationships among peers and with mentors (Garcia, Alvarez, Roman, Martin, Merchan and Zamudio, 2020). Effectiveness of mentoring programme in social, emotional, behavioural and academic areas has also been affirmed (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn and Valentine, 2011). Little, Keaney and Britner (2010) empirically have indicated that talented students who took part in a summer mentoring programme improved their self-concept and developed positive adult-relationships. Subotnik, Edmiston, Cook and Ross (2010) buttress the finding above that the students developed career goals and learnt about the realities of success after school, beyond building important adult relationships. Garcia et al. (2020) recommend the relationships between mentors and mentees in a relaxed atmosphere that enables learning and well-being while Bayer, Grossman and Dubois (2013) affirm the importance of the students' relationships with their mentors and the latter's accessibility is key in studies on mentorship.

Another variable of interest in the present study is ability grouping. Otherwise recognized as homogenous grouping or tracking, ability is designed to heterogeneity of instructional groups and to improve teaching quality (Zhang, 2014). It is of utmost importance to put students into classes according to their abilities. Grouping the students based on their abilities raises their levels of achievement and it is a unique practice that enhances social and cognitive well-being of the students. Daniel (2007) remarks that, when assigning students to tracks, prior test scores or other performance measures that have been administered or that have been provided from other grades or schools are examined by educators. Schofield (2010) further lends credence to the submission of Daniel above by saying that ability grouping centres on assigning students to different educational environments based on their intelligence quotient, subject-matter ability, grades or achievement test scores.

Classroom grouping 'in terms of organization and instruction may consist of a whole class seated and working together, small groups or pairs of individuals working alone (Batchfold, Baines and Kutnick, 2003). It could be observed, from the above, that high-ability students share knowledge, experiences and ideas while working in the group. This bond promotes social relationships as well as intellectual development among the learners. Specifically, these classroom-based studies of student grouping can be classified as either naturalistic or experimental. According to Kutnick, Sebba, Blathfold, Galton and Thorp (2005), underlying the two-way classification above is a fundamental divide, in which naturalistic observations of the variety of ways that students are grouped while experimental or imposed group working arrangements either by theory or policy that are likely to be associated with specific outcome effects. However, a number of studies have bridged the divide by planning and undertaking theoretically informed interventions over time with the expectation that teachers and students trained in the use of particular orientations will internalize group work practices (Gillies, 2003; Webb and Mastergeorge, 2003; Blatchfold, Kutnick and Baines, 2007).

Muir (2007) has reported that high-ability students show positive academic effects from some forms of homogenous grouping. The strongest positive academic effects of grouping for high-ability students result from either acceleration or classes that are specially designed for the students, using specially trained teachers and differentiated curriculum and methods. At this point, the cognitive wellness of the students is methodically factored into curricular planning and provisions while teacher's relationship with them serves as a springboard to their social well-being. Furthermore, positive effects of ability grouping on subject aptitude among high-ability students have been found in literature. Liu (2009) has found that ability grouping in English setting fostered the English self-concept of lower-performing students and lowered the English self-concept of higher-ability students, whereas the grouping practice in Mathematics and Science settings had no effects on the corresponding academic self-concepts.

Liu, Wang and Parkins (2005) have equally established that the academic self-concept of low-performing secondary school students was lower than that of their high-ability counterparts



immediately after being grouped. However, three years after, those students had a more positive academic self-concept than their high-ability peers, while a more pronounced decline in academic self-concept was found among highly able students. Wadesango and Bayaga (2013) have investigated ability grouping as an approach to narrow achievement gap of students, adopting an interpretative qualitative research method and a case study research design and found that students had a better understanding of their abilities, capabilities, strengths and weaknesses in the grouping process. The researchers concluded their study by reporting teachers were the most invaluable to develop and implement ability-grouping policies. In essence, the present study examines mentorship and ability grouping as barometers of socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students in Ibadan, Oyo State.

### Statement of the problem

Social issues in the education of students known for high academic accomplishments are so critical that they negatively impact on the effective learning process among high-ability students. These learners are characterized by unexpected low level success, lack of motivation, adaptation problems, dropping out of school and social isolation. The students also lack the education appropriate for their individual cognitive needs in Nigerian schools. At this juncture, it should be noted that the students' socio-cognitive needs cannot be addressed by traditional practice in our schools, but alternative educational models. Instructional strategies to meet these unique needs of the students should, therefore, be examined. However, mentorship and ability grouping as strategies to examine social and cognitive changes appropriate for the interests, learning styles and learning paces of high-ability students are unknown to the current researcher as an empirical study. Therefore, this study examined **mentorship and ability grouping as barometers of socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students in Ibadan, Nigeria.**

### Significance of the study

The study would enable high-ability students to identify learning tools that are in compliance with their interests, learning styles and learning paces. It would inform them about what the teachers and other professionals who are making waves should do to help them cope with social issues and improve intellectually. The study would be of immense help to the teachers who are to serve as

mentors to the students. The teachers would be able to guide the students in the achievement of better academic results by grouping them according to their ability levels for instructional purposes. The teachers would therefore help in shaping the students' social skills in such groups and making them learn faster and better as a result of shared experiences and ideas. Other professionals such as guidance counselors, social workers and so on would be able to serve as mentors to the students. The study would equally serve as a springboard to spurring curriculum planners and developers into meeting the unique needs of high-ability students. This would be possible by incorporating mentorship and ability grouping into Nigerian curriculums.

### Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Is there any significant relationship between mentorship and socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students in Ibadan?
2. Is there any significant relationship between ability grouping and socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students in Ibadan?
3. Is there any significant joint contribution of mentorship and ability grouping to socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students in Ibadan?

### Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design. The study required schools with proven track records of high academic accomplishments in general examinations. This brought about use of purposive sampling in the selection of three public and three private secondary schools in Ido and Ibadan Southwest Local Government Areas of Ibadan, Oyo State, making six schools altogether. Having identified the schools for the study, a letter of introduction was secured from the Department of Special Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, for the field work in the selected schools. The consent of the management of each school was sought as the rationale for the study was spelt out by the researcher. Six research assistants were employed, trained and used along in the administration of all the instruments for the study. The researcher supervised the administration of the instruments to the students.

The population of the study comprised all



senior secondary school (SSS) 2 high-ability students in Ibadan Metropolis. In the sampling, a multi-stage procedure was adopted in selecting the respondents for the study. At first, forty (40) students with 60% scores and above in English Language and Mathematics (in first term, 2020/2021 Academic Session) were selected across departmental classes, making a sum of two hundred and forty (240) students. English Language and Mathematics Screening Test (ELMST) developed by the researcher and validated was used to identify high ability. The students, who made 65% and above were considered for the next phase. Slosson Intelligence Test Revised Third Edition for Children and Adults (SIT-R3) was utilized to measure the intelligence quotient of the students. Those whose intelligence levels are higher than the average and who indicated interest towards the inclusion after orientation on the instruments were considered as respondents. One hundred and fifty-two (152) students were aged between 14-16 years (82 boys, 70 girls), fifty-eight (58) were aged 17-19 years (24 boys, 34 girls) while only five (5) were aged 20 years and above, making a total of one hundred and ten (110) boys and one hundred and five (105) girls. Furthermore, a sum of one hundred and eight (108) public school students and one hundred and seven (107) private school students were involved. Two

hundred and fifteen (215) high-ability students were involved in the study all together.

Three major instruments were utilized for data collection: Socio-cognitive Well-being Scale (SCWS) developed by the researcher and the internal consistency reliability was 0.84, using split-half method. The instrument was used to find out social and cognitive wellness of the students. Mentoring Relationship Scale (MRS) adapted from Mentorship Programme Manual (2010), Department of National Treasury, Republic of South Africa, based on the specific roles of mentors and mentees. The instrument was used to elicit responses of the respondents on the roles their mentors (teachers, parents, guidance counsellors, and other professionals) play in their lives and what they stand to gain in turn. Internal consistency was 0.91, using test-retest method. Ability Grouping Scale (AGS), also developed by the researcher to require specific information on the ability of the students and grouping for instructional purposes. The internal consistency reliability was found to be 0.78, using Cronbach Alpha. The data collected from the administration of the instruments were analysed using inferential statistics of Multiple Regression Analysis and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation.

## Results

**Research question one:** Is there any significant relationship between mentorship and socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students in Ibadan?

**Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the relationship between mentorship and socio-cognitive well-being among high ability students in Ibadan**

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	n	r	p-value	Remarks
Socio-cognitive well-being	61.3116	8.55551	215	.641*	.0001	Sig.
Mentorship	44.8651	8.12608				

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 shows that there is a significant relationship between mentorship and socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students in Ibadan ( $r = .641$ ,  $n =$

215,  $p(.0001) < .05$ ). Therefore, mentorship predicts socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students in the study.

**Research question two:** Is there any significant relationship between ability grouping and socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students in Ibadan?

**Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the relationship between ability grouping and socio-cognitive well-being among high ability students in Ibadan**

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	n	R	p-value	Remarks
Socio-cognitive well-being	61.3116	8.55551	215	.591*	.0001	Sig.
Ability grouping	43.3860	8.19875				

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



Table 2 indicates that there is a significant relationship between ability grouping and socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students in

Ibadan ( $r = .591$ ,  $n = 215$ ,  $p(.0001) < .05$ ). Therefore, ability grouping predicts socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students in the study.

**Research question three:** Is there any significant joint contribution of mentorship and ability grouping to socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students in Ibadan?

**Table 3: Summary of Regression analysis showing the joint contribution of mentorship and ability grouping to socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students in Ibadan**

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate			
.673	.453	.448	6.35901			
ANOVA						
Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	7091.486	2	3545.743	87.686	.0001	Sig.
Residual	8572.635	212	40.437			
Total	15664.121	214				

Table 3 reveals the joint contribution of mentorship and ability grouping to socio-cognitive well-being. The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlation  $R = .673$  and a multiple  $R^2$  of .453. This means that 45.3% of the variance is accounted for by the two predictor variables when taken together. The significance of the composite contribution is tested at

$\alpha = 0.05$ . The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded F-ratio of 87.686 (significant at 0.05 level). This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable is significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

**Table 4: Summary of Regression Analysis showing the relative contribution of mentorship and ability grouping on socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students in Ibadan**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig. p
	B	Std. Error	Beta Contribution		
(Constant)	27.473	2.594		10.590	.000
Mentorship	.468	.074	.445	6.316	.000
Ability grouping	.296	.074	.283	4.020	.000

Table 4 indicates that the relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights, viz: Mentorship ( $\beta = .445$ ,  $p < .05$ ), Ability grouping ( $\beta = .283$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Hence, mentorship and ability grouping were significant. That is, the two variables could independently and significantly predict socio-cognitive well-being among the students in the study.

### Discussion of findings

#### Mentorship and socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students

The finding reveals that mentorship has a significant relationship with socio-cognitive well-

being among students noted for superior ability. As an enrichment option, mentorship positively impacts social and cognitive wellness among students whose meteoric academic achievement distinguishes them in the entire population. This is a result of the fact that mentoring relationships ameliorate the thinking, reasoning, sense of judgment and academic as well as social skills of the students. It could be observed, from the foregoing, that knowledge, ideas and skills garnered from the students' interactions with teachers, parents and relevant professionals are robust enough to bolster their social and intellectual performance levels. The above assertion is in tandem with submissions by MONE (2015) and Meyer



(2006) in which mentorship is proved to be a learned partnership that is jointly or complementarily developed by the mentor and the mentee and found as a strong professional development tool that enhances high-ability students' advancement in their social life, educational pursuit and career strategy.

Additionally, mentorship, which is an idea-sharing relationship between a professional teacher/expert and high-ability mentee(s) affords the former to provide acceptance and encouragement and support the social and educational development of the latter. Hascher, Cocard and Moser (2004) maintained that effective mentors offer emotional and psychosocial support to the mentees. The present study also establishes the above opinion. Therefore, mentorship has been found impactful in the social and learning well-being of high-ability students because educational interests/aspirations as well as fostering of meaningful relationships with peers and adults can be achieved through the instrumentality of mentoring programmes. Garcia, Alvarez, Roman, Martin, Merchan and Zamudio (2020) reported that mentorship as an educational strategy for high-ability learners provides the students with cognitive stimulus and a peaceful environment to have positive inter-personal relationships.

#### **Ability grouping and socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students**

The present finding indicates that a significant relationship between ability grouping and socio-cognitive well-being exists among high-ability students. Grouping of learners on the basis of their ability or academic performance has been reported to raise achievement levels among the students. The practice is also found unique because it enhances social well-being of the students. The current finding lends credence to Muir's (2007) report in which it is affirmed that high-ability students show positive academic effects from some forms of homogenous grouping. It should be remarked that the strongest positive academic effects of grouping for high-ability students result from either acceleration or classes that are specially organized for the learners, using specially trained teachers with modified curricular methods and strategies. Furthermore, the cognitive well-being of the students is strategically taken into consideration in the process of curricular planning and provisions while teacher relationship with them serves as a proponent of their social wellness.

Liu (2009) has equally reported that ability grouping fosters academic self-concept among high-ability students. It could be inferred that the students

share knowledge, experiences and ideas while working in a group as this bond promotes positive or good social relationship as well as intellectual progress among the learners. More so, assigning students to different environments based on their intelligence quotient, subject-matter ability, grades or achievement test scores has an implication for healthy rivalry and insightful contributions among the learners. Through these experiences, social and learning development cannot be negotiated among students with notable academic results.

#### **Mentorship, ability grouping and socio-cognitive well-being among high-ability students**

The result shows that a joint contribution of mentorship and ability grouping to socio-cognitive well-being is significant. The significance of the two variables on social and cognitive wellness of the students implies that students who are grouped into classes based on their achievement levels for mentoring programmes are bound to have their social and learning needs met appropriately. The present finding is in consonance with Wadesango and Bayaga (2013) who investigated ability grouping as an approach to narrow achievement gap of students and found that students had a better understanding of their abilities, capabilities, strengths and weaknesses in the grouping process. This suggests that social wellness is attained among the learners because of their sensitivity to their personal ability and that of others in the group. This fosters a mutual relationship in the group and helps them learn to seek assistance on their areas of weaknesses.

As a complementary function, Little, Keaney and Britner (2010) found that talented students who took part in a summer mentoring programme improved their self-concept and developed positive adult-relationships while Garcia et al. (2020) is of the opinion that the relationships between mentors and mentees in a relaxed atmosphere foster learning and well-being of the students. Therefore, high-ability students who are strategically grouped for mentoring purposes will definitely learn and better adjust socially.

#### **Conclusion**

The role of mentorship and ability grouping in the advancement of social and learning wellness among high-ability students has been foregrounded in the study. Mentoring programmes have been adjudged impactful in terms of psychosocial support to the students while ability grouping has been found with specific outcome effects. The complementary



contribution of these variables to social and cognitive wellness of high-ability students remains meaningful and indelible.

### Recommendations

*On the basis of the above findings, the following are recommended:*

Teachers are to serve as mentors as well as role models to the high-ability students. They should consider the cognitive needs of the students by catering for their (learners') learning curiosity. Being an epitome of standard behaviour will also help the teachers to serve as a springboard to the social wellness of the students. Other professionals can equally function in this regard to enable the students actualize their dreams and aspirations.

High-ability students should explore their creative instincts in the atmosphere created through mentorship and ability grouping. Since the two programmes positively impact their socio-cognitive wellness, they should therefore maximize the opportunity to enhance their creative behaviour.

Mentorship and ability grouping should be incorporated into the current regular curriculums to cater for the social and learning needs of high-ability students. The impact of this inclusion is bound to be felt by the nation at large as a result of the students' contributions to national development.

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