

**Estrategia de enriquecimiento: una intervención
educativa en altas capacidades y talentos**

**Enrichment strategy: an educational
intervention in high abilities and talents**

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RESUMEN

Las personas con altas capacidades son sujetos con un nivel de habilidad mucho mayor al de sus contemporáneos, en una o más categorías de aprendizaje, pudiendo obtener resultados extraordinarios y excepcionales (Pfeiffer, 2011). La necesidad del presente trabajo surge por el alto número de estudiantes con altas capacidades diagnosticados en un centro educativo de la ciudad de Guayaquil, que representan un reto continuo y complejo para el equipo docente, que en ciertos casos no presentan títulos afines a educación, o en sus pensum universitarios no recibieron preparación acorde a prácticas inclusivas que den respuesta a las necesidades educativas especiales de esta población. Atendiendo a esta necesidad el presente trabajo tiene como objetivo elaborar un Programa de intervención que favorezca el desarrollo de las habilidades cognitivas y de adaptación social de un alumnado concreto, específicamente de segundo a cuarto de EGB con altas capacidades de un centro educativo de la ciudad de Guayaquil; para ello se ha diseñado una intervención que consiste en capacitar al equipo docente en la implementación de la estrategia de enriquecimiento curricular e identificación del alumnado con altas capacidades. La propuesta de intervención cuenta con diez sesiones correctamente detalladas, un cuestionario pretest-postest y una escala de identificación para los estudiantes con altas capacidades; la metodología es cualitativa, diseño investigación acción. Se evaluará la consecución de los objetivos del Trabajo de Fin de Estudio y se espera que este tipo de intervención mejore los rendimientos de los estudiantes con altas capacidades tanto en el área académica como socioemocional.

Palabras claves: altas capacidades; enriquecimiento curricular; necesidades educativas especiales; capacitación docente; adaptación curricular

ABSTRACT

People with high abilities are subjects with a much higher level of ability than their contemporaries in one or more learning categories, obtaining extraordinary and exceptional results (Pfeiffer, 2017). The need for the present work arises due to the high number of students diagnosed with high abilities in an educational center in Guayaquil. It poses a continuous and complex challenge for the teaching staff, which in some cases do not have education-related degrees, or did not receive preparation in their university curricula to respond to the special educational needs of this population. In response to this need, the present work aims to develop an intervention program that favors the development of cognitive skills and social adaptation of a specific group of students with high abilities from second to fourth grade of primary education in an educational center in the city of Guayaquil. As a result, an intervention has been designed that consists of training the teaching team to implement the strategy of curricular enrichment and identify students with high abilities. The intervention proposal has detailed ten sessions, a pretest-posttest questionnaire, and an identification scale for students with high abilities. The methodology is qualitative, action research design. The achievement of the End of Study Work will be evaluated, and it is expected that this type of intervention will improve the performance of students with high abilities in both the academic and socioemotional areas.

Keywords: high abilities; curricular enrichment; special educational needs; teacher training; curricular adaptation.

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Descargar para Mendeley y Zotero

Introduction

This scientific article adopts the modality of intervention proposal and fulfills the function of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) to opt for the Master's Degree in Special Education at the International University of La Rioja. The problem that motivates the intervention is the high number of students diagnosed with high abilities in an educational center in the city of Guayaquil, a continuous and complex challenge for the teaching team, whom without degrees in education or preparation for intervention cannot respond to the educational needs of this population. This makes it easier for students to develop disruptive behaviors in the classroom, have little motivation for school learning, and experience emotional and social difficulties.

Therefore, it is desired to develop an intervention program to train teachers of the educational unit by providing them with tools that will enable them to develop curricular adaptation programs for the population with high abilities and by favoring their inclusion and enhancing their cognitive socioemotional skills. Additionally, it is desired to promote early detection in the initial courses, an essential tool to ensure this group of students' good development and future social integration (Escámez & Sánchez, 2017).

The intervention program will be composed of 10 teacher training sessions. Different topics related to the characteristics and educational needs of students with high abilities and the existing strategies to address these needs, with emphasis on curricular enrichment and its implementation in the classroom, will be addressed.

The present proposal seeks to address the student population with high intellectual abilities, which is not easily identified in the educational environment. According to Renzulli and Reis (2017), around 15% to 20% of students possess high intellectual abilities, of which 99.12% and 99.41% respectively have not been identified (as cited in Torrano and Sanchez, 2019). According to this, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training indicates that only 34113 students with high abilities are registered, which corresponds to 0.42% of the student population and means that 129498 students are unidentified and unattended. Therefore, this generates that around 50% of this group is part of the statistics of students with school failure (Sanz, 2020). Unfortunately, in Ecuador, there are no studies that specify percentages regarding the identification of students with high abilities, so Spanish studies allow us to reference the possible Latin American reality.

When not identified, students with high abilities may present problems in their school performance such as insecurity, low self-esteem, anxiety motivated by a poor stimulation in both the school and family environment, an inflexible and non-personalized educational context, poor self-regulation and planning capacity, low expectations, low self-esteem, low resilience, social immaturity, impulsivity and inattention, presence of monotonous or sequential tasks, low frustration tolerance, and poor perseverance (Reis and McCoach, 2019; Sastre, 2020).

Regarding the socioemotional area, three common characteristics of students with high abilities should be considered for their approach: perfectionism, overexcitability, and social disadvantage (Dabrowsky, 2018; Pfeiffer, 2017).

Perfectionism is a characteristic that can be healthy or unhealthy depending on the socioemotional work that the child has received from an early age and the characteristics of his or her environment. Unhealthy perfectionism is characterized by excessive concern for not making mistakes, dissatisfaction with their performance, high sensitivity to failure, anxiety, high self-criticism, and inability to manage emotions properly, among others (Pfeiffer, 2017).

Children with high abilities tend to experience symptoms of disintegration that are commonly associated with their overexcitability, which can develop in the intellectual, imaginative, emotional, psychomotor, and sensory areas (Dabrowsky, 2018).

Social disadvantage plays a negative role in children with high abilities because they grow up in an unstimulating family, social and educational environments, with many deficiencies. As a result of a low socioeconomic level, these children will have more significant difficulties identifying and addressing their special educational needs. Therefore, the risk of presenting school and social difficulties and school failure is even greater (Pfeiffer, 2017).

Another factor that can influence if not observed is the double exceptionality. Students with high abilities may have another diagnosis in comorbidities such as specific learning disorders, autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and many others, which makes their condition even more complex (Webb, 2019). It is therefore essential to adequately identify their skills to enhance their areas of strength and address their areas of potential deficit.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Education of Ecuador (MINEDUC) in Article 48 of the Organic Law of Intercultural Education (LOEI-Ley Organica de Educacion Intercultural), decrees that “children, adolescents, young people and adults with a superior endowment, have the right to receive personalized education or special education according to their high abilities” (MINEDUC, 2017, p.41). To this end, the Ministry of Education issued AGREEMENT No. MINEDUC-ME-2016-00080-A, “Regulations to control the processes of detection, assessment, educational attention, evaluation of learning and promotion to students with a superior endowment in the national education system” (MINEDUC, 2016, p.2), where it establishes the procedures to be applied in a mandatory manner in all educational units of the national territory, to provide adequate and timely attention to students with high abilities.

Therefore, it is essential to implement curricular adaptations that respond to the special educational needs of these students, holistically addressing their areas of development. Curricular enrichment, which is the basis for the elaboration of this intervention proposal, is among the curricular adaptations for this population. The curriculum enrichment program that is developed for students with high abilities must be relevant, taking into account the needs of each individual according to their context and characteristics.

Given the above, the research problem is: Does the implementation of a curricular enrichment program favor the adaptation and inclusion of students with high abilities? One of the significant challenges of current education and inclusive practices is the need to develop and implement programs that fit the reality of

each population, and that allows us to respond to the needs of our students, in this opportunity to serve the population with high abilities from the pedagogical strategy of curricular enrichment.

With the title “Educational intervention in high abilities and talents: Curricular enrichment strategy,” the present proposal was elaborated to attend specifically to the population diagnosed with high capacities in an educational center in the city of Guayaquil, with a great diversity of characteristics and a professional challenge for teachers, especially those who do not have degrees related to education and lack the basic knowledge to implement inclusive programs. Furthermore, students diagnosed with high abilities who have not received treatment according to their needs have presented multiple difficulties regarding socialization, school adaptation, motivation to study, self-control, emotion management, low academic performance, and others, which make the development of a curricular adaptation elementary. This information was gathered first hand by the author of this proposal, based on his experience as coordinator of the institution’s Student Counseling Department (SCD).

In short, this work aims to favor the development of cognitive and social adaptation skills of students with high abilities from second to fourth grade of general primary education in an educational center in the city of Guayaquil. As a result, teachers will be trained on the main characteristics of students with high abilities so that they can understand their behavior and particularities, as well as to identify those who have not been diagnosed in order to finally develop curricular enrichment programs that respond to their individual cognitive and socioemotional needs. Thus, applying an adequate curricular

enrichment program is expected to enhance the development of cognitive skills of students with high abilities to favor their socioemotional adaptation, increase their motivation to study, promote healthy leadership, and improve their quality of life.

Literature review

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework was elaborated by reading books, scientific research, articles published in indexed journals and papers, both in English and Spanish, by the essential authors in students with high abilities, population selected to be addressed in this intervention proposal. The search for documents was automated, exploring the central international databases such as SCOPUS, SciELO, Google Scholar, LATINDEX, UNIR Virtual Library.

High abilities have been for many years the main object of study of various authors, which gave rise to multiple conceptualizations and methods of approach; however, problems persist in the identification and care of this population due to the lack of unification of judgments and the multiple myths that develop around it. Therefore, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) unified criteria to develop a definition that allows the proper identification, understanding, and care of people with high abilities, considering their complex nature and a multifaceted vision (National Association for Gifted Children, 2019).

The NAGC defined students with high abilities and talents as individuals capable of performing at a higher level than others of the same age, experience, environment in one or

more domains (NAGC, 2019). Therefore, these students require modifications in their curriculum to enhance their abilities and learn according to their needs.

Pfeiffer (2017), in his article “The Tripartite Model on High Ability and Best Practices in the Assessment of the Ablest,” exposes the main characteristics of his model, which proposes a new paradigm for the study and attention of the most gifted individuals, based on three perspectives: High intelligence, outstanding performance and high potential (p. 66).

Pfeiffer defined that children with high capacities are subjects with a much higher level of ability than their contemporaries in one or more learning categories, thus obtaining extraordinary and exceptional results (Pfeiffer, 2017).

The first perspective, the high ability is seen as high intelligence, is characterized by high scores on intelligence tests or intelligence quotient (IQ) in which their intellectual aptitudes are well above average, placing them in a higher range, between 2 and 10 percent of the population of their age and with a very advanced level of abstract reasoning (Pfeiffer, 2017). This group is identified by applying a standardized intelligence test with 125 or 130 IQ results. Therefore, their attention should be based on the modification of the academic curriculum, special academic programs, and the implementation of strategies such as acceleration.

The second perspective, the high ability is seen as outstanding performance, does not exclude the importance of high intelligence; however, it posits academic excellence as the key characteristic to identify and define a person with

high ability, defining him or her as academically gifted (Pfeiffer, 2017). Therefore, this group of students requires a personalized program of enrichment and establishment of high academic challenges, which enhance their abilities and respond to their exceptional academic needs.

The third perspective, the high ability is seen as high potential or potential for excellence, includes the group of students with high abilities who have not been adequately stimulated, nor have they been provided with opportunities to develop their skills and potential, remaining in stagnation or poor development (Pfeiffer, 2017). This group does not achieve good results in standardized tests or their academic life; however, their peers’ high potential is observed in one or several areas. As a result, their attention is based on an enriched curriculum, incredibly motivating, which includes interventions that compensate for their shortcomings due to social inequality, managing to update all their potential not yet socially exhibited.

Gagné’s DMET

The Differentiated Model of Endowment and Talent (DMET) proposed by Gagné is structured by three key components that allow its understanding and study: Gifts (G), talents (T), and the talent development process (D). In turn, it has two additional components that complete the model: Intrapersonal (I) and environmental (E) catalysts (Gagné, 2019).

First, the gifts or G component corresponds to the natural capacities that can be evidenced in the different activities performed by the child in his daily life both at home and in the educational environment. Gagné (2019) considers that natural abilities are not innate, but they develop

in a person's life, especially in the early years. Second, the talents or T-component is assessed through performance measures and is based on the classification of occupations by American College Testing's "World of Work," inspired by John Holland's personality types (1978). Finally, the Talent Development process or component D begins with identifying or selecting the subject for inclusion in a stimulation program aimed at developing his or her talent based on systematic and specialized activities (Gagné, 2019).

Subotnik's developmental model

Subotnik (2019) defines high abilities as a continuously changing, dynamic category or construct that develops throughout life based on the time of appearance and opportunities provided by society, thus giving rise to talent development. Therefore, expertise, creativity, and eminence are three levels of talent development that apply to the different fields of human activity, with eminence as the objective to reach or achieve as a society with students with high abilities. However, not all students will reach that level. It establishes that high capacities are not equivalent to a high IQ but are conceptualized based on aspects of current performance. As a result, high ability in children should be seen as a high potential, which depending on the trajectory of mastery, can reach a higher level of performance or eminence (Subotnik, 2019; Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Worrel, 2020).

The development of talent will be limited by internal and external aspects, such as intrinsic motivation, perseverance, response to feedback, external recognition, and autonomous learning. Consequently, it is essential to also take care of the psychosocial aspect of cognitive development, which is key to enhancing the

subject's development and improving their quality of life (Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius & Worrel, 2020).

Subotnik, Olszewski, and Worrel (2020) propose the identification of students with high abilities through assessments by domains, based on the developmental trajectories of the subject in order to create programs focused on responding to psychosocial and pedagogical needs, which enhance their levels of both cognitive and psychosocial development

Renzulli's three-ring model:

Renzulli (2018) postulates that there are two kinds of high abilities which are high scholastic abilities, associated with brilliant academic ability and high IQ test scores; and high productive-creative abilities, related to the ease and remarkable ability to solve real problems without the need to possess a very high level of IQ. According to the three-ring model, developing these two types of high abilities depends on the interaction of three components: superior intelligence, a high level of engagement, and excellent involvement in activities.

An approach to the Special Educational Needs of students with high abilities:

Students with high abilities are part of the group of students who require personalized and even individualized attention due to their exceptional abilities in one or several areas. For instance, they learn very fast, have an excellent memory, broad vocabulary, high comprehension, high sensitivity, prolonged attention, very high curiosity, outstanding sharpness of their sense of humor, and others. Thus, they require activities at their learning pace and interests to maintain

their motivation and academic involvement (Webb, Gore, Amend, & DeVries, 2017). The following describes this population group's foremost educational and emotional needs.

Educational Needs

The special educational needs of students with high abilities are very diverse due to the heterogeneous characteristics of the group. Thus, students with high abilities may show great interest in a given subject, focusing all their potential and attention. For example, they are attracted to solving complex problems due to their fascination with cognitive complexity, are highly self-motivated and persist in the subjects they are interested in, can handle a tremendous amount of knowledge related to an area, and feel a great need to continue reading and learning about their area of interest. Moreover, they have a great capacity to examine and remember details like analyzing problems and posing solution alternatives, visually absorb large amounts of information, possess great understanding of concepts at higher levels than their peers, and learn concepts quickly and easily (Pfeiffer, 2017).

Regarding creativity and the artistic area, students with high abilities tend to be very creative, bright, and highly specialized in their skills. Consequently, they prefer complex activities that contribute to new conceptualizations and methods. Also, and because their thinking is very fluid and with many ideas, they have a great capacity for observation and attention to detail, can give original solutions to problems and improvise, can challenge traditional solutions, ideas or theories, are questioners, very critical, reflective, imaginative and with a great sense of humor (Pfeiffer, 2017).

All these characteristics make them vulnerable to rigid methodologies and inflexible curricula, which do not allow them to develop their potential and meet their higher learning needs, causing rejection towards school and lack of interest in academic learning, which inflates dropout rates, as previously explained.

Another factor that significantly affects children with high abilities is internal and external dyssynchrony, which occurs between the child and the school or his family. As a result, this affects the development of the child's talent or potential due to inadequate family management of his high ability, or the significant difference existing with the ability of his peers, which, if not detected by teachers, ends up being poorly stimulated (Hezkuntza & Saila, 2018).

On the other hand, the internal dyssynchrony that can occur between different sectors of their intellectual development, between their emotional and intellectual capacity, or between their needs or interests and those of their peers can make it challenging to identify and care for this population. Therefore, they can be easily misdiagnosed or labeled as children with inappropriate behavior, hyperactive and with problems in managing emotions, and immature, thus not elucidating the real reason for their symptoms (Hezkuntza & Saila, 2018).

It is essential to employ multiple classroom strategies that favor the development of their potential and academic involvement, such as assigning them various activities or jobs related to their interests and abilities and providing them with complementary material that allows them to deepen on the contents seen and propose research topics. In addition, more strategies will include establishing curricular

adaptations on the content of the subjects, making them more complex and broadening them, establishing playful activities and implementing games that allow them to develop their skills, working on a project basis according to their areas of interest, and developing experiments that allow the development of reasoning and logic among others.

Gubbins’ model

Figure 1

Enrichment categories according to Gubbins

Enrichment categories, according to Gubbins		
Enrichment based on didactic unit	Enrichment as an extension of the curriculum	Enrichment as a technique to differentiate the curriculum

Notes: Adapted from “Three Rings, Three Enrichment Activities, Three Decades Earlier” by Gubbins, 2020, *Gifted Education International*, 26(2-3), p. 157-168. Copyright 2020 by SAGE Publications.

Gubbins (2020) proposes three types of enrichment, shown in Figure 1. First, enrichment through didactic units refers to the addition of didactic units that allow the student to be exposed to more complex topics that are not considered in the regular curricula. These additional topics can be developed through projects or in cooperative work groups among students with high abilities at particular times of the week.

Enrichment as an extension of the curriculum allows the teacher to add complexity or depth to the content of the curriculum based on the experience in enrichment programs,

interests, and abilities of the students. This will allow for more challenging content and the incorporation of critical aspects such as research, complex problem solving, and the use of fine-tuned cognitive skills.

Enrichment as a curriculum differentiation technique allows students to have an almost parallel curriculum that responds to their specific needs, addressing in greater depth each of the topics established in the general curriculum based on the greater demand for associating, analyzing, and interpreting information (Gubbins, 2020).

Methodology used

The methodology selected is qualitative, action research design. This design was chosen for its effectiveness in solving problems within the educational practice, for its capacity for participation, collaboration and emancipation, interpretation of educational results, and learning involved. The design will allow the development of the different objectives proposed by favoring obtaining an answer to solve a latent problem in the educational reality, the lack of identification, and proper attention of the student population with high capacities (Montero & León, 2020).

The work will be done with teachers based on practical workshops, where key concepts will be worked on, and instructions in the use and elaboration of essential tools will be given. For example, teachers will be instructed on applying the GATES 2 Scale to identify students with high abilities and the elaboration of an Individual Curricular Adaptation Document (ICAD) for students with high abilities as curricular enrichment strategies.

Analysis and discussion

The design of the intervention proposal was elaborated through the study and critical analysis of the different methodologies specialized in educational intervention, and curricular enrichment proposals successfully carried out in different contexts and taking into account the characteristics of the population and sample to be intervened, based on the first-hand experience that the author of the present proposal has in the school.

Target audience

The intervention aims to improve the quality of life and school adaptation of students with high abilities from second to fourth grade of primary education of an educational center in Guayaquil, children between 6 and 9 years of age. The school selected is private and provides educational services to the male population of the high socioeconomic level of Guayaquil and Samborondón, from second grade in primary education to twelfth grade in high school.

In the school year 2019 - 2020, and in collaboration with external psychological evaluation centers specializing in identifying students with high abilities, a large number of students with high abilities were identified. Consequently, they required specific adaptations to carry out their schooling satisfactorily; however, there are still unidentified students who may present high potential or double exceptionality, making it challenging to reflect their abilities in the applied tests. Besides, many new students each year enter the second year of primary education.

On the other hand, teachers presented multiple conceptual and methodological gaps when complying with the curricular adaptations required by this population, hindering their adequate inclusion. These gaps were evidenced in the different classroom observations carried out by the SCD in activities where teachers tried to implement enrichment strategies for students with high abilities.

This was ratified by institutional quality surveys, which tried to identify the areas in which teachers require training, thus highlighting the need to be instructed in the special educational needs associated with high abilities and their attention strategies. In addition, all this generates that students with high abilities present adaptation problems in developing their potential and socioemotional difficulties. Therefore, the school teachers will be responsible for attending to the educational population with high abilities once the intervention program is completed. The sampling applied was non-probabilistic causal or by accessibility.

Analysis of the results

The evaluation was carried out through the pretest-posttest design, widely used in research and interventions to measure the impact caused in a given population (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2017). The technique made it possible to elucidate the teachers' knowledge and beliefs about high abilities, the social relevance of their attention, and identification, among others, at two different times. Additionally, to evaluate the functional or application area, teachers had to individually develop an ICAD for a student with high abilities and conduct a demonstration class where the various strategies learned were put into practice.

Procedure for data collection and analysis

The first session was held on April 9, 2021, to sensitize teachers to the problem to be addressed, and a knowledge validation instrument related to the topic of high abilities was applied. The same instrument was used in session ten on June 11, 2021, prior to the program's closing, to identify the teachers' knowledge and verify the achievements reached for the benefit of students with high abilities. The instrument to be used was a questionnaire of our authorship. Once applied, the questionnaire was rated quantitatively, with a maximum score of ten and a minimum of zero.

The grades obtained by the teachers in both applications were contrasted and analyzed with the SPSS statistical analysis computer system, which allowed to have a before and after the intervention to objectively determine the impact it had on their beliefs and knowledge. Furthermore, the mean, median, and mode were obtained to determine variations and establish comparisons. Besides, to evaluate the practical or applied part of this knowledge, the teachers prepared an ICAD thinking of one of their students diagnosed with high abilities. Also, they received additional information provided by the trainer, such as the student's characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses to include in their work.

Once the ICADs were prepared, the teachers prepared and executed an activity where they put into practice what was stated in the document and implemented the strategies learned in the training process. In addition, immediate feedback was provided after each activity presented, where the successes, strengths, and areas for improvement were established. Also, the trainer reviewed the ICADs in detail once

the last session was over to provide individual counseling, feedback on the aspects to be corrected, and clarify any doubts that the teachers may have had after the training process.

For all of the above, we assume the following conclusions

The present scientific article was created to contribute significantly to the cognitive and socioemotional development of students with high capacities at a specific school in Guayaquil. The specific objectives were to determine the conceptual and methodological deficiencies presented by the teachers of the educational center, to explore the existing methodologies for the attention of the student population with high abilities to select the most pertinent according to the needs detected in the center. Also, to design a training program that provides teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement curricular adaptations that respond to the special educational needs of students with high abilities had an achievement that is evidenced in the present document.

The specific objective number one, to determine the conceptual and methodological deficiencies presented by the teachers of the educational center, was favorably achieved by applying the self-authored questionnaire, which was elaborated based on the main theories associated with high abilities written in the theoretical framework.

The specific objective number two, to explore the existing methodologies for the attention of the student population with high abilities and to select the most pertinent according to the needs detected in the center, was fulfilled with the attainment of the theoretical framework

elaborated with the intervention proposal, which was outlined based on the reading, both in English and Spanish, of the prominent experts in the area of study, taking into account their publications in indexed journals, printed books, digital books, among others.

The specific objective number three is to design a training program that provides teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to implement curricular adaptations that respond to the special educational needs of students with high abilities. It was successfully achieved with elaborating the section Design of the Intervention Proposal, which details a complete teacher training program that includes all the necessary aspects such as methodology, planning, human and material resources, activities, and evaluation process.

Considering the favorable achievement of the specific objectives of the Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), it is concluded that its general objective has been successfully achieved by having a document that comprehensively addresses the subject.

The document will contribute to a great extent to the educational centers, especially to those that do not know about the topic of high capacities or about an effective response to the needs that arise as a result of this diagnosis. Moreover, it will contribute to the social and academic environment by dealing with a topic that is currently neglected in many social sectors of the country due to a series of myths that affect the identification and attention of the population with high capacities.

Finally, this experience has contributed significantly to the academic and professional training of the master's student by putting into practice all the knowledge acquired during the master's degree.

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