

A case study on how an English pull-out intervention has improved the writing skills of highly able Primary 6 students in Hong Kong

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Introduction

More able students in Hong Kong primary school and writing intervention

Gifted or talented students are those who perform better than their peers in a specific cultural domain (Pfeiffer 2011). Due to their better academic performance and advanced thinking capabilities, talented students may face challenges like underachievement and disengagement if their educational needs are not satisfied (Diezmann et al., 2003)

This case study will focus on a pull-out English enrichment intervention to support the more able students aged between 11-12 years in a primary school in Hong Kong. With 60 minutes of daily instruction it is designed to enhance the regular school-based curriculum.

This assignment will try to analyse how this 'pull-out' literacy intervention is helping to improve the English writing skills of four high-performing students of primary 6. It will also try to determine its success in improving the students' motivation levels in their regular classroom.

Literature review

Gifted education policies in different countries

In 2000, Hong Kong's Education Bureau started a three-tier implementation model for gifted education. New Zealand, Wales and the United States acknowledged the special learning needs of their talented students. On the other hand, England withdrew the Young Gifted and Talented Programme in 2010 and Finland does not have any policy on the same.

Identifying students and skills standards of teachers

National Association for Gifted Children [NAGC] (2013) acknowledge that giftedness is a dynamic construct and need to cater to diversified population. They had also has a set of skill standards for preparation of teachers in gifted education.

Pull-out programs

Educational acceleration, curriculum compacting, grouping, and pull-out programs are a few of the strategies for gifted education (NAGC, 2019).

Motivation and writing competency

Motivation is an important aspect of acquisition of a second language (Gardner, 2001). A study conducted to evaluate the effects of self-regulated learning (SRL) strategy in EFL writing on primary 4 students in Hong Kong revealed that high-performing students use more SRL (e.g. planning) and motivation as compared to their peers (Guo and Bai, 2022).

Methodology and methods

Case Study

A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance or phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p.21).

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews that are useful for 'individual research projects' (Sharp, 2012, p.74) are conducted with principal of the school, the local teacher-in-charge, and class teachers of the focus group.

Observations

Non-participant semi-structured observations (Sharp, 2012, p.84) of the focus group of students were conducted to see and listen to how they reacted to the instructions to avoid biasness (Cohen et al., 2011, p.468).

Best practices and theories

The Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Education Programming Standards (NAGC) and the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent of Gagné (1992) and Gardner's (2000) socio-educational model of second language acquisition are considered to compare with the intervention.

Conclusion

- 1 The pull-out intervention is well placed within the policy framework of Hong Kong and the Education Bureau. But the identification of students are based on a single parameter not considering the different aspects of giftedness.
- 2 The students are extrinsically motivated and show a restrictive practice of sentence patterns and grammar driven by high levels of structured instructions with a variety of teaching methods.
- 3 The intervention has not been able to influence the students' motivation levels in their regular classrooms.

References

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Image 1: Hong Kong Academy of Gifted Education

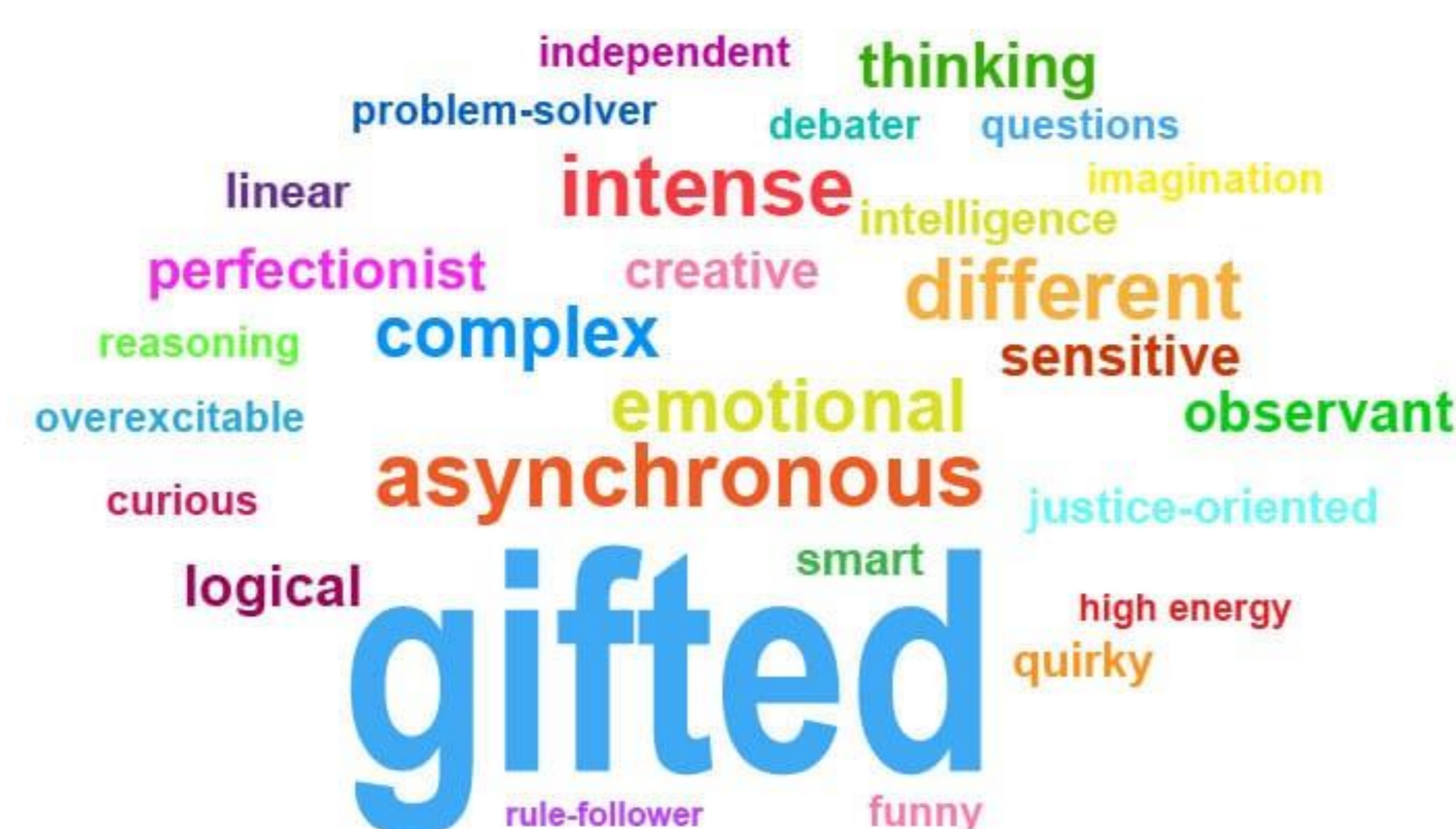


Image 2: Westmount Charter School, Alberta, Canada (Gifted education page)

Data, analysis and discussion

Connection to education policies and NAGC standards

The intervention can be supported by the school-based gifted education policy of the Government of HKSAR. Pull-out nature of the enrichment program can be backed by NAGC *Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards*. However, the school has a narrow approach to identify the students by experienced yet not exactly trained (to select gifted students) professionals.

Connection to underpinning theories

The intervention can be backed by Gagné's theory of DMGT (2008) which supports that intrapersonal skills, environmental influences and interventions can play the role of catalysts to convert giftedness into talent (pp.5-9). The students' motivation are completely extrinsic or goal oriented as recognised one of the driving forces by the socio-educational model of Gardner.

Connection to Hong Kong's context

English plays a passive role in Hong Kong students' life outside the classroom. The focus group is also has only external motivation to improve their writing skills.

