



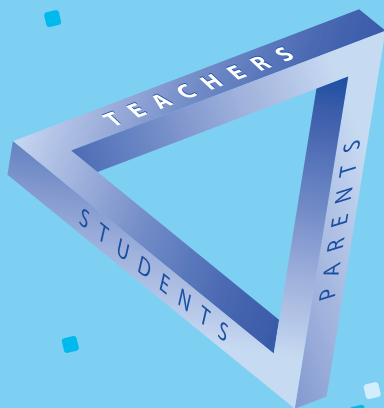
香港資優教育學院
The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education



Gifted Education



**Gifted Education
at a Glance**



Preface

Why gifted education? Is it the concern for only a select group of teachers?

One of the missions of frontline educators is to develop students' potential to the fullest. Some people consider gifted students who have high ability as being well endowed and hence need not be given any special attention or provision. However, it is known that gifted learners who are not adequately challenged and given the appropriate provisions to develop their potential might face learning and/or social and emotional issues and even underachieve academically.

This brochure provides a brief overview of gifted education, including information on giftedness, identification and provision. There is also a list of websites with information and resources which you could read about and explore this subject further.

What is giftedness?

There is no single definition of giftedness - how giftedness is conceptualised is dependant on the school of thought a person or society has. In the past, a gifted person is commonly defined as a person who has high intellectual ability. This conception has evolved over time to include different domains of intelligence.

In Hong Kong, the Education Bureau (EDB) employs a broad definition of giftedness according to the Education Commission Report No. 4 (1990). Thus, children who demonstrate exceptional achievement or potential in one or more of the following areas are considered to be gifted:

- General intellectual ability
- Specific academic aptitude
- Creative or productive thinking
- Leadership ability
- Visual and performing arts
- Psychomotor ability

Gifted Education and Its Importance

Generally speaking, gifted education refers to programmes or services that are designed for gifted learners to meet their intellectual and emotional needs.

Gifted children learn with ease and speed and are often easily bored in the regular classroom. In order to cater for their learning needs, the school may need to adjust instructional strategies, the level of difficulty of the content and the learning environment accordingly.

While developing gifted programmes, the affective dimension of learning should also be included. Gifted learners see and experience the world differently because of their different abilities and sensitivities. Hence they may not be easily understood and some of them may face social and emotional problems. A key component of affective education should be counselling support, perhaps through the pastoral system in the school, to help gifted learners who have issues and problems.

Gifted education is important because it seeks to provide an appropriate and positive learning and schooling experience for students to realise their potential later on. Schools and teachers who enrich the learning of the gifted usually have to employ effective instructional strategies and assessments within a differentiated curriculum. This will help to raise the quality of education in general.

In summary, gifted education is not only capable of driving up standards in schools by showing what children are capable of, it is also a strategy for catering for learner diversity and meeting individual learner's needs.



Gifted Characteristics

Given the broad definition employed in Hong Kong to describe giftedness, it will be challenging to list all the characteristics. However, below are some characteristics that are commonly found in gifted learners:

- observant
- use sophisticated vocabulary and read extensively
- imaginative
- learn easily and quickly
- ask probing questions, demonstrating genuine inquisitiveness
- have intellectual passion
- enjoy problem solving and hypothesising
- able to handle complex or abstract ideas
- form connections between pieces of information easily
- are creative in generating new ideas and pursuing innovations

These characteristics are only indicators. You might want to gather more information on your student's aptitude and achievement in order to better understand his/her ability. Also you may want to bear in mind that the span and degree of giftedness may vary between different gifted individuals because their intellectual, physical, emotional and social domains develop at different rates. Such an uneven development is called asynchronous development.



Identification

Identification of gifted learners must be linked to provision. The process of identification (or selection of students) is meant to choose participants for specific gifted programmes, either organised by the school or for external programmes outside the school.

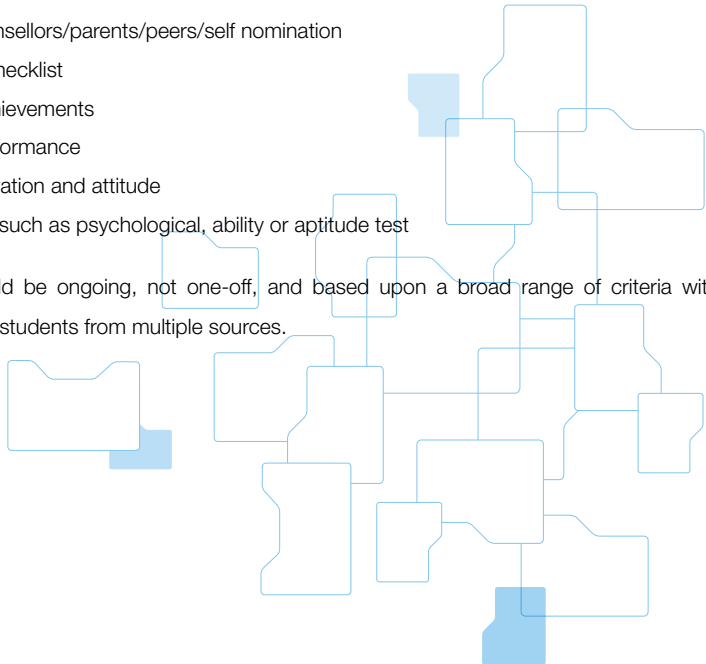
In many overseas education authorities, schools are requested to provide gifted education programmes for the top 10% of students and this is a useful starting point to consider when making provisions for the high-ability students in the schools.

Identification of students for gifted education provisions should be able to identify students who demonstrate the ability to perform at a very high level but who sometimes may not be able to achieve well or score high marks in tests. Consideration should also be given to students who might not have access to resources or exposure to materials and enriched educational experiences since these students also need nurturing to develop their gifts.

There are some useful tools:

- teachers/counsellors/parents/peers/self nomination
- behavioural checklist
- academic achievements
- students' performance
- learning motivation and attitude
- assessments such as psychological, ability or aptitude test

Identification should be ongoing, not one-off, and based upon a broad range of criteria with information on the students from multiple sources.



Provisions

Provisions for the gifted need not be confined to schools. There are various out-of-school courses that serve to develop the strengths of the gifted. These could be in the form of credit courses at tertiary institutions or enrichment courses in summer camps or even talent searches or competitions. The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education is one of the institutions in Hong Kong that provides out-of-school programmes.

However, gifted learners spend most of their time in the classroom. So it is important to cater for their learning within the everyday school environment, including the classroom. Research evidence clearly shows that curriculum, learning and teaching strategies should be differentiated in order to cater for the different learning needs of the gifted (and, in fact, all students) within the classroom. The school might consider:

- compacting the core curriculum
- accelerating the content
- providing the opportunity for independent study
- infusing higher-order thinking
- encouraging creativity
- grouping students of similar ability together to allow them the opportunity to learn from one another and find peers with similar interests and strengths to develop friendships

When it is too challenging to differentiate and cater for just one or 2 children, schools could consider providing differently for the highly gifted such as allowing them to grade or subject skip.

Whatever the provision is, the goals of any good gifted education programme should take into account the needs of gifted learners and the best ways to meet these needs with a full consideration of the students' intellectual, physical, social and emotional development.

Be Prepared

Gifted education is not simply feeding the gifted with difficult or higher level materials, a one-off programme or some short, popular courses. It should be a structured programme which requires the school members to have professional knowledge in the understanding of the gifted, identification, differentiation of content and process as well as the affective development of gifted learners. Gifted education also requires collaboration with parents and the wider community to achieve the best possible support for the gifted.

As a teacher new to gifted education you might want to:

- familiarise yourself with the gifted characteristics and observe these in your students
- attend professional training on gifted education
- make use of external resources to support the gifted learners such as counselling services, online learning programmes, curriculum development partnerships offered by other organisations and institutions
- work alongside experienced gifted education teachers
- collaborate with linked schools to develop a better level of understanding through shared best practices

The best teachers are reflective practitioners who wish to hone the craft of teaching so that they could make the best learning opportunities for their students. It is, or should be, an on-going pursuit of most educators. When you get to know more about gifted education, you will find that you become a more effective teacher not just of the gifted but of all students.

Useful Resources

The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education

<http://hkage.org.hk/en/>

Gifted Education Section, Education Bureau, HK

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/cd/ge>

Center for Gifted Education,

The College of William & Mary, USA

http://www.cfge.wm.edu/pub_links.htm

Hoagies Gifted Education Page, USA

<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/>

London Gifted & Talented, UK

<http://www.londongt.org/>

National Association for
Gifted Children, USA

<http://www.nagc.org/>





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