

A Case Study of Internal and External Support System for Gifted Individuals with Learning Disabilities in Colorado, U. S. A.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is (1) to explore the crucial effective factors of internal support for Gifted Individuals with Learning Disabilities(GILD), and (2) to explore the crucial effective factors of external support for Gifted Individuals with Learning Disabilities in Colorado.

There is one subject involved in this study. Qualitative research methods were conducted, an informal interview with parents of the subject, and structured open-ended questions were developed by the researcher in this study.

The main findings of the study are as follows:

(1)The crucial effective factors of internal support for the subject were:

- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| 1.Self-confidence | 2.Beliefs | 3.Attitude | 4.Desire |
| 5.Faith | 6.Prayer | 7.Passion | 8.Loyalty |
| 9.Self advocacy | 10.Willingness to learn | | |
| 11.Attentiveness | 12.Drive and determination | | |
| 13.Hard work | 14.Positive outlook | 15.Responsibility | |

(2)The crucial effective factors of external support for the subject were:

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1.family support | 2.School support | 3.Workplace support |
| 4.Communities support | 5.Society support | 6.Church support |
| 7.Governmental programs | 8.Legal system support | |
| 9.Organizations (Such as ARC, Masons, IDEA) | 10.Friend support | |
| 11.Technology support | | |

In general, the subject was satisfied with internal support and external support system, but there was still room to improve.

This study also provides recommendations to families, schools, communities, society, teachers, administrators and the public.

Key Words: Gifted Individuals with Learning Disabilities, Internal Support, External Support System.

INTRODUCTION

There are numerous well-known Gifted and Specially Talented person with Disabilities, such as Helen Keller (Author with blind-deaf, USA); Franklin Roosevelt (President of America with poliomyelitis, USA); Kevin Kern (Pianist/composer with partial sightedness, USA); Christopher Brown (Musician with poliomyelitis, USA); Stephen Hawking (Physicist with severely handicapped, English); Thomas Edison (Inventor with learning disabilities, USA); Tom Cruise (Movie star with learning disabilities, USA, Wu, 1998); Vincent Van Gogh (Artist with emotional disturbance, Netherlands); Louis Braille (Braille inventor with visual impairments, France); Ludwig Van Beethoven (Musician/composer with hearing impairments, Germany). And specially talented people with disabilities, so called "extraordinary people", such as Yi-Tsou Hu (Symphony orchestra conductor with Down syndrome, China); Bin-Huey Lee (Famous singer with visual impairments, Taiwan, Wu, 1999); Tony Deblois (Pianist with visual impairments and autism, USA, Wu, 1999); Alonzo Clemens (Sculptor with mental retardation, USA., Treffert, 2003); Kim Peek (the Real Rainman with multi-handicapped, (Wu, 1997, 1998; Treffert, 2003); Ray Charles, Andrea Bocelli, and Stevie Wonder (Musicians with visual impairments, USA); Yamamoto (Another Van Gogh of Japan with hydrocephalic, Japan, Morishima, 1974); Yamamura (Artist of finger painting with mental retardation, Japan, Morishima & Brown, 1977); and many more. All of them were simultaneously gifted and specially talented with disabilities, those gifted and specially talented disabled people have contributed significantly to our society. Their success is due to appropriate education, internal support, and external support.

But most people do not consider that the person who has learning disabilities, visually impairments,

hearing impairments, or even multiple handicaps (deaf-blind) may also be mentally gifted, or possess a special talent.

Statement of Problem / Research Hypothesis

There are at least 12 million students in the United States who have special education and health care needs (Jasper, 2005). Some of them have high IQs or possess special talents. We identified these children as the gifted and specially talented students with disabilities.

According to Johnsen and Corn (1989), two to five percent of the children with physical and/or sensory disabilities are gifted. By this estimate, there are between 120,000 and 540,000 gifted and specially talented with disabilities students in the United States (Whitmore & Maker, 1985). These students may have visual Impairments, hearing Impairments, physical handicaps, emotional disturbance, learning disabilities, speech and language disorders, attention deficit hyperactivities disorders (ADHD), autism, and severe handicaps. These students are taught in both special classes and regular classes.

The individualized transitional education program (ITEP) is designed to help students with special needs transfer from school to adult life, including college, family, community, work place, and society. Many adults with learning disabilities are capable of successfully working in the community through ITEP. However, the area of internal and external support system for the gifted and specially talented students with learning disabilities has not been systematically studied by researchers before.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore the crucial effective factors of internal and external support system for Gifted Individuals with Learning Disabilities

(GILD) in Colorado.

Secondly, the findings of this study would provide valuable information for teachers, parents, and administrators to improve the internal support and external support for these students.

The results of this study will help learning disabilities individuals to promote to learn effectively.

Questions to be answered

The purpose of this study was to investigate the related factors that contributed to the internal support and external support for learning disabilities students. Based on the related literature and discussions in proceeding sections, the following research were formulated in light of the purpose of this study:

(1)What are the crucial effective factors of internal support for the subject ?

(2)What are the crucial effective factors of external support for the subject ?

Since a qualitative method was used in this study, research questions were not limited to the above, and these two questions emerged for further exploration. The qualitative researcher uses part of the study to learn the important questions. Researchers do not assume that enough is known to recognize important concerns before undertaking the research (Bogdan & Biklen,1982). The above research questions were used as the basis of the structured, openended interview questions.

Definition of terms

For the purposes of clarification, the following terms are defined:

(1)The gifted individuals with learning disabilities (GILD)

The GILD are those individuals of exceptional ability, specially talented, or those who had potential to achieve high performance with learning disabilities.

There is one subject selected for participating in this study, the subject was identified as a gifted with learning disabilities and recommended by the Disabilities Support Services (DSS) of University of Northern Colorado (UNC).

(2)Internal Support System

Internal support can be a grouped learning skills, working skills, social skills, communication skills, recreation skills, value, motivation, and beliefs .

(3)External Support System

The external supports may include such as family supports, school supports, community supports, work place supports, government supports, legal supports, and society supports.

METHODOLOGY

Research Procedures

The purpose of this research was to investigate the related factors that contribute to the internal and external support for the gifted individuals with learning disabilities in Colorado. To accomplish this purpose, the researcher reviewed the literature, developed structured open-ended questions, and collected raw data from participants' informal interviews and informal interviews with subjects' parents, using qualitative methodology. The data collected were then analyzed and discussed.

Research Methods

(1)Structured Open-ended Questions Development

In order to provide this research study, the researcher developed a structured open-ended questions. To develop the questions, the researcher first reviewed the literature and then included the possible related factors of internal and external support system in the draft structured, open-ended questions.

(2) Sampling Procedures

In qualitative research, all sampling is done with some purpose in mind (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the purpose was to investigate the related factors on internal and external support system for the Gifted Individual with Learning Disabilities (GILD) in Colorado. A strategy was used to get possible access to the GILD. Since this study was designed to use human subjects for data collection. The letters, structured open-ended questions and related information to be used in the study were sent to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Northern Colorado and approved by the IRB.

A graduate students with learning disabilities was be recruited for this study. Graduate students with learning disabilities were the primary population for this sample of convenience. Therefore, the subject was purposefully chosen.

A challenge to the researcher was to identify the GILD. Since the GILD was confidentially filed in the Disabilities Support Services (DSS) of University of Northern Colorado (UNC). First, the application form, letter, and structured open-ended questions information were sent to UNC Institutional Review Board (IRB) in early Spring, 2006. To possible access to GILD contacted, GILD with assistance provided by DSS, the researcher was able to receive the name, address, telephone number, and email address for student who are the GILD.

The researcher sent an email letter to the subject and encouraged him to agree to participate in this study. The subject were identified and agreed to participate in this study. An informal interview was conducted before the subject completed the questions, then structured open-ended questions was sent to the subject.

To assure confidentiality, primary investigator was the only person who had access to the name of

participant and his respective identification number.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher attempted to find the crucial related factors of internal and external support that contribute to a successful transition by using data collection and data analysis. In qualitative studies, triangulation of data is important. Sources of information should be diversified and checked against each other (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Since the all of the structured open-ended questions were answered by the subject, we did double check the information.

In a qualitative study, data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials. Analysis includes working with data, organizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The answers of structured open-ended questions were cut in to pieces and analyzed.

Subject Description

The characteristics of the subject participating in this study was described as follows:

Carl is a male subject with age of 28 from Idaho Springs, Colorado. He has reading, writing, and spelling problems. He is an UNC graduate with a bachelor degree in philosophy of public policy. He currently is pursuing his master's degree in the School of Special Education at the University of Northern Colorado, and works for Development Will Disability Resource Center in Lakewood, Colorado.

With a first grade reading level in the traditional sense, he is currently working on writing a book about his experiences with Wagner's granulomatosis and dyslexia. He is hoping to raise funds so he can attend the University of Southern Carolina full-time next year. This will allow him to enroll in an inter-disciplinary

study of special- education and neurology or adaptive technology. He has the privilege of lecturing about his experiences and knowledge with Wagner's dyslexia and adaptive technology at schools and conferences.

His parents invited me to visit his family in Idaho Springs, Colorado and welcomed me very warmly. We had almost four hours of informal interview, and then they showed me the history of his family, and spoke with me about how they have paid attention and recognized efforts to Carl's achievements, provided with family support and financial assistance, and how they fight with the school system.

Carl is a very active person, and has received many awards, such as :

- a. Recipient of Denver Metropolitan Mayor's youth award 1995.
- b. Recipient of the Heroism Award for Life Saving for Boy Scouts of America 1996.
- c. Recipient of UNC Star of the Future award 2003.

CONCLUSIONS, SUGGESTION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the crucial effective factors of internal and external support system for Gifted Individuals with Learning Disabilities (GILD) in Colorado, U.S.A..

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the conclusions are addressed as follows :

- (1) The crucial effective factors of internal support for the subject were:
 - a. Self-confidence b. Beliefs
 - c. Attitude d. Desire
 - e. Faith f. Prayer
 - g. Passion h. Loyalty

- i. Self advocacy j. Willingness to learn
- k. Attentiveness l. Drive and determination
- m. Hard work n. Positive outlook
- o. Responsibility

(2) The crucial effective factors of external support for the subject were:

- a. family support b. School support
- c. Workplace support d. Communities support
- e. Society support f. Church support
- g. Governmental programs
- h. Legal system support
- i. Organizations (Such as ARC, Masons, IDEA)
- j. Friend support
- k. Technology support

Suggestions

The suggestions to the families, schools, communities, societies, teachers, administrators, and the public were:

- (1) Suggestions for teachers
 - a. Be involved in their student's education, meet their needs.
 - b. Get the teachers involved in the process.
 - c. Be aware of the student's individual needs and challenges.
 - d. Find ways to be supportive of students' efforts and challenge them to strive beyond their expectations.
 - e. Do not place labels or limitations on what they can try to achieve.
- (2) Suggestions for schools
 - a. Provide opportunities to assist students with their needs and wants.
 - b. Be flexible without sacrificing academic integrity, and to make accessibility the number one concern. The rest should fall in to place.
 - c. Provide safe environments for learning that motivate individuals to learn more.

- d. Offer supportive services and adaptive equipment necessary to facilitate the learning process.
- e. Train faculty and staff to be sensitive, empathetic, encouraging, and offer unconditional positive regard.

(3) Suggestions for administrations :

- a. Make sure that the faculty is trained properly to work with individuals with special needs.
- b. Provide positive learning experiences and ensure that supportive services and adaptive equipment are available for individuals facing different challenges and adversity.
- c. Provide training and education to help employers understand how individuals with special needs can contribute to their employment opportunities as well as the support services or adaptive equipment that might be necessary to complete the job or task.

(4) Suggestions for communities :

- a. To be supportive of their participants dreams.
- b. To make sure that buildings are accessible.
- c. Make support services for training, education, and community involvement are accessible.
- d. To support services that allow individuals to live independently.
- e. Foster support for individuals to build a future where they feel they can contribute to society.

(5) Suggestions for families :

- a. Respect their special needs children's opinions, differences, needs, and wants.
- b. Offer training, education, and counseling and to provide encouragement.

(6) Suggestions for employers :

- a. Listen to their employees' needs.
- b. Have an accessible office.

(7) Suggestions for the public :

- a. Continue to learn about special needs individuals and accept mainstreaming through more ex-

posure the public will achieve a deeper understanding.

- b. Accept that all individuals have something unique and special to offer in improving each others' lives and that we can all learn something from each other.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following are research studies recommended for researchers interested in these areas.

- (1) In this study, the researcher was not able to recruit GILD subjects in the other categories, such as the gifted and specially talented students with visual impairments, emotional disturbance, attention deficit disorders/hyperactivities (AD/HD), autism, cerebral palsy, and multihandicapped. So studies of these populations are recommended.

- (2) A longitudinal follow-up study of GILD students should be initiated to track their future achievement and productivity.

- (3) Qualitative methodology was used in this study. This method can be further used to investigate successful strategies for parenting GILD students .

- (4) To begin to establish a unique knowledge base, future research is recommended to investigate whether GILD parents' expectations, acceptance, and stereotypic conceptions effect GILD students achievements.

- (5) It would be informative to conduct cross-cultural study between Taiwan and Colorado, to compare the crucial effective factors of internal support and external support for Gifted Individuals with Learning Disabilities

REFERENCES

(略，若有需要請洽原作者)

美國科州學習障礙資優者之內在與 外在支持系統個案研究

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摘要

本研究之目的在於探討美國科羅拉多州一位資賦優異卻具有閱讀、書寫與拼字能力障礙的研究所學生，內外支持系統：

一、探討學習障礙資優個案內在支持的重要因素。

二、探討學習障礙資優個案外在支持的重要因素。

本文以質性研究探討方式進行，並以結構化的開放問卷，正式訪談個案，及非正式的與個案父母進行訪談，等方式蒐集資料，進行分析。

本研究之主要發現如下：

學習障礙資優個案內在支持的重要因素：

- | | | |
|---------|---------|----------|
| 1.自信 | 2.信仰 | 3.正向態度 |
| 4.欲求 | 5.誠實 | 6.祈禱 |
| 7.熱情 | 8.忠誠 | 9.自我支持 |
| 10.學習意志 | 11.懇切傾聽 | 12.動機與決心 |
| 13.努力工作 | 14.正向前瞻 | 15.責任感 |

學習障礙資優個案外在支持的重要因素

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| 1.家庭支持 | 2.學校支持 |
| 3.職場支持 | 4.社區支持 |
| 5.社會支持 | 6.教會支持 |
| 7.政府的計畫 | 8.法律系統支持 |
| 9.組織的支持（如智障市民組織、同濟會、美國障礙者教育法案） | |
| 10.友人支持 | 11.科技支持 |

個案對於內在與外在支持系統覺得滿意，但仍有提升空間，本研究也提供個案給家庭、學校、社區、社會、教師、行政人員與大眾之建議。

關鍵字：學習障礙資優者、內在支持系統、外在支持系統

