

The Reflection on the 2nd International Conference on Twice Exceptionality

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*On the runway, I strode forward,
As if I were a hunter, running continuously toward my goal.
The prey I hunt is none other than myself,
Only by constantly surpassing the previous me can I conquer myself,
And become stronger....*

By Chia-heng Chang

This poem was written by my student Chia-heng Chang, who is also the main subject of my research regarding 2e student in this international conference. The meaning of this poem and the scenario it creates coincidentally and perfectly depict how I've been feeling about this once-in-my-lifetime experience of participation in this international conference held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.



The Second International Conference on Twice Exceptionality dealing with issues and programs related to talented people with disabilities (twice exceptional) took place in Riyadh from February 12 to 14, 2023. As a participant under the guidance of Professor Ching-chih Kuo, I felt honored to have the priceless opportunity to present my research on an international stage. Apart from learning from my own qualitative research, I have also gained lots of insightful thoughts and breathtaking ideas from the keynote speakers' lectures as well as the participants' research reports. All of them have been the essential nutrients helping me become better and stronger as a doctoral student dabbling in the

field of special education.

More than 50 speakers were invited to this conference and it was sponsored by over 15 co-organizers. The speakers were all well-known scholars in the field of 2e education. Due to my flight time, I could only participate in three keynote speeches. The following is the sharing content of the important and impressive speakers:

Nurturing the Unique Nature at University



Prof. Ching-chih Kuo has been dedicated to special education for more than 40 years. Her research projects on the development of gifted education include educational policy, identification, multiple intelligences, teaching models, overexcitement (OE's), emotional development, metacognition, twice exceptional (2e), brain function, gifted females, gifted preschoolers, and longitudinal

study. For many years, she has been committed to the promotion and implementation of 2e education, and has made outstanding contributions to the improvements, adjustments and innovations of the existing gifted concept and gifted education.

Prof. Kuo's lecture, entitled "Nurturing Talented Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders at University," elaborated the programs and research on 2e students promoted by National Taiwan Normal University since 2012. Dr. Kuo illustrated how to make use of the enrichment curriculum and affectionate counseling for ASD students with excellent artistic talents to realize their potential. The students' outstanding works have demonstrated their extraordinary creativity and originality, as have been recognized by numerous awards both domestically and internationally. In addition, Professor Kuo suggested that 2e students should receive more attention from educators in their talent development, especially when the disadvantages they suffer may jeopardize the fulfillment of their potential. They need more care and support from social agencies, families and schools. The more they receive, the more potential they can achieve. At the university level, a support system for autistic youth can be established and video teaching can be used to improve





social skills in the workplace. When receiving career planning through mentoring and counseling, these young artists can have outstanding performance.

Prof. Kuo's lecture related to the successful experience of the 2e enrichment programs was insightful and moving. The scholars present at the meeting were all moved by the dedication of the teachers of special education as well as the efforts and self-fulfillments of the 2e students. Appreciation and highly affirmative feedback from the audience surged in after Prof. Kuo finished her thought-provoking keynote speech.

Not Just How to Fix the Stone, But How to Polish it into a Gem

Dr. Susan Baum is the co-director of the American Joint Commission on 2e Education and spokesperson for the Special Interest Group on 2e Education for the National Association for Gifted Students. She is both an educator and author whose writing and research include differentiated curriculum and instruction, gifted education, and gifted students with learning disabilities.



Dr. Susan Baum's speech focused on the proposed Talent Centered Model, emphasizing that 2e students, owing to their disabilities, often experience high levels of anxiety, lower academic achievement, and negative feelings about being different. However, when helping these students, we should not just focus on making up for her weaknesses, but more importantly, developing their strengths, so that they can perform at their best. In the speech, she clearly introduced the characteristics of different 2e students as well as the key points we should focus on and the teaching strategies that can be adopted. Whether it is a gifted student with dyslexia, autism or ADHD, there are many practical and feasible methods for the counseling of 2e students. According to the different characteristics of students, different teaching guidance was provided. In



particular, she believed that educators should uphold a key belief—Special education for 2e students is not just about repairing, but developing children's talents.

Dr. Susan Baum's lecture helped us to better understand the essence of her model and acquire many practical teaching techniques. Among the fellow participants, Ms. Li Mei-hui's research was also based on the Talent Centered Model, analyzing

a case of tutoring a mathematics and science gifted student with a selective disorder. During the intermission, we shared our ideas with Prof. Susan Baum and her student Ms. Kim Vargas. Through face-to-face communication, we not only obtained Prof. Baum's advice but, as researchers, we further understood the different fields related to the development of 2e students. She also gave us some suggestion on the research directions that can be carried out in the future.

Facts and Fiction Regarding 2e (+1e) to Be Dealt with

Dr. Elena L. Grigorenko has received two Ph.D. degrees from Moscow State University in Russia, specializing in cognitive psychology, and Yale University in the United States, specializing in developmental psychology. She has also obtained the qualification of clinical psychologist from Fielding University. Her works and research have been funded by numerous federal and private agencies from at home and abroad. She has also received several national and international professional awards and supported several non-profit organizations.



Her speech was entitled “*2e kids (and adults): facts and fiction*,” discussing the history and definition of 2e education through the review of documents, today's situation of 2e education, as well as the related issues that should be clarified. She also elaborated in detail about the facts to be bear in mind and the fiction to be illuminated.

First of all, in addition to 2e, Dr. Grigorenko proposed the concept of 3e. The third e means “exceptional conditions.” That is to say, 3e represents the three aspects of cultural difference, giftedness and disability respectively. In America, for example, she believed that Latino and African-American students are still under-represented in the identification of gifted students in American schools and in the proportion of receiving the service of programs. The cultural differences of many 3e students are not fully reflected in the identification, which is one of the problems that must be solved at present. Other than this, she also believes that the lack of a systematic identification method has led to an excessively high number of special students in the United States.

Dr. Grigorenko also mentioned that 2e Education has been practiced cooperatively well regarding inclusive-education, the concern of fairness and justice, and the active responding to the needs of 2e students' parents. Inadequacies, on the other hand, include “lack of an operational definition on 2e” and “lack of evidence-based and systematic intervention in services for 2e students.” As for the research on 2e,



she mentioned that most of the current studies are case studies, and the suggestions for future research include three aspects: “operational definition of 2e,” “identification” and “service.”

Taiwan’s Soft Power Demonstrated in this Conference

The Taiwanese participants in this conference included university professors and teachers from elementary schools, middle schools and high schools. Some of their aural presentations covering university gifted programs, regional gifted programs, and the school-based gifted programs designed for 2e students with diverse



talents. The clever and delicate design of the gifted programs manifested the teachers’ creativity and ingenuity. Based on the 2e students’ special needs, the programs involved painting courses, origami activities, performing arts training, and appropriate selection of mathematics. Through all the creativity and ingenuity displayed in the programs, most of the audience was touched by both the hard work of the teachers and the joy of 2e students in their talent development. Other than the gifted programs, some aural presentations were based on 2e case studies. Focusing on the development of personal strengths and talents, the case studies demonstrate how teachers created an appropriate environment, sought for various resources and cooperated with colleagues to help 2e students learn and develop, and even make career choices. I believe that all the teachers and scholars on the spot shared the same feelings and experiences—when courses are designed based on the needs of different children and adjust them due to their demands,



seeing the children’s earnest attitude in their passionate eyes, or the irreplaceable joy of growth on their faces, a sense of satisfaction and achievement seems so real and down-to-earth. In that case, a teacher or researcher is no longer just a deliverer of knowledge, but rather another parent outside the family or another bosom friend outside the school.

I Can Make It and So Can You!

During the intermission time of different sessions, the organizer also squeezed in successful cases of 2e adults in various fields, including the social activist, drama producer, and comedian Nawal Akram, and the Paralympic Ping-Pong player Ibrahim Hamadto.



The one that moved me the most was Ibrahim Hamadto. He won the silver medal in table tennis in the 2011 and 2013 African Championships and the 2013 Egyptian Open, and was named the best player of the year in Arabia! In front the podium, he talked about how he lost his hands at the age of 10, and determined to engage in table tennis—

“I fell into the gap between the train and the platform. When I woke up from the coma, I found both my arms had been amputated. After leaving the hospital, for a whole year, I didn’t go outdoors except when it was late at night. I didn’t like to see the pity and sympathy on people’s faces.” Although he had lost his two arms, he did not give up taking on sports—“I used to run around with my friends, but I was often injured because I couldn’t balance myself. When I went to the local youth center, the table tennis caught my eye.”

The audience at the meeting could feel all the setbacks and hard work he had been through, but he didn’t seem to have any complaints about the challenges assigned by God. His sincere tone and firm attitude expressed his love for table tennis—without the palm, the mouth could still pick up a racket; without arms, the feet could still serve or even slam the ball.

Describing such an outstanding and distinguished athlete, we often like to use a Chinese idiom “*handicapped but not disabled*(殘而不廢).” However, I personally think this is very inappropriate. These outstanding people who shine in different fields of society, striving to illuminate themselves and others at the same time, are “*neither handicapped nor disabled*(不殘更不廢).” They are exactly the same as everyone else—



no one is perfect! The stories of the setback and challenge they have been through prove that they are not only role models for us to follow, but also a momentum to motivate us to better ourselves.

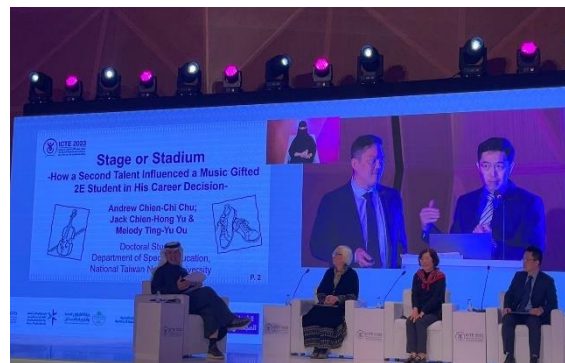
Conclusion

It could be found in this international conference that people in Saudi Arabia were very concerned about the development of the physically challenged. In addition to arranging well-known experts and scholars to deliver relevant speeches and research reports, they also invited many high-tech companies to exhibit new technology products and assistive devices.



We could see how people with disabilities not only obtain convenience in life through the application of modern technology, but also fulfill their potential with the assistance of high-tech products. For example, sign language interpreter avatars could help hearing-impaired people get instant translations in public speeches or meetings. Compared with the full-time sign language interpreters that can be seen in many conferences or in the news, the sign language interpreter avatars would definitely achieve better results and save more labor costs.

Participating in international conferences can not only be taken an efficient access to the latest information, but also a fantastic platform for the exchange of ideas and notions. This conference provided an invaluable opportunity for us to meet professors, teachers and researchers from various



countries, to share experiences and research results, and even to establish contacts and connections. It would be very helpful for future professional development. In this conference, I presented two research reports conducted with the cooperation of Mr. Chien-hung Yu and Miss Ting-yu Ou—“*Stage or Stadium—How a Second Talent Influenced a Music Gifted 2E Student in His Career Decision*” and “*The Implementation and Effectiveness of a 2e Effective Curriculum Collaboratively Designed by Gifted Teachers and a Counselor.*” Both studies have employed practical teaching experience to discover the career choices of 2e students and the problems



emerged in teachers’ cooperation. By interviewing the subjects and collecting relevant data, we have concluded the methods and strategies that should be adopted. Through the sharing of successful cases in the meeting and collecting suggestions and research results put forward by scholars, we could have more

abundant and multi-faceted stimulation for doing related studies, and have a clearer grasp of future research. In the private consultation after the presentation, we also received the acclamation and advice from scholars such as Susan Baum, which served as a stimulus to carry on with our further studies and a nutrient to grow into a real scholar.

“Let’s take a ride on the magic carpet together and travel around to enjoy the irreplaceable beauty and fabulous diversity of the world. You can never get tired of watching the wonderful scenes. This is the Arabian Nights you’ve heard of...”—This is the theme song of my favorite cartoon in my childhood. The



cartoon is based on the novel *Arabian nights*, telling us stories happening in the Arab world. Many of the fascinating and unexpected plots as well as mysterious and appealing Middle East culture, which were thought to be unattainable at the time, actually became so real due to this opportunity to experience it myself during this trip. Just like Aladdin getting help from the genie of the lamp, and just like Ali Baba cleverly demonstrating his creativity and wit when dealing with the gangsters, not only have I met many warm and friendly Islamic friends along the way but also personally experienced the customs and culture of the Middle East. The most important task and the highlight of this trip must be the conference—to listen to insightful research results and significant findings of many celebrated experts and professors, as well as exchange opinions and share experiences with participating scholars. This one-week trip to the Middle East is really as incredible as the stories in the *Arabian Nights*. I would like to demonstrate my gratitude again to Prof. Ching-chih Kuo for her leadership and guidance again, which gave me the invaluable opportunity to better up myself and help me broaden my horizons to an international scale. I also appreciate my colleagues’



companionship along the way—making the journey bursting with laughter and making me understand the genuine truth of friendship. It was indeed an eye-opener and a journey of surprise and gratitude.