

Effects of a Cluster Grouping of Gifted and Twice Exceptional Students on Academic Motivation, Socio-emotional Adjustment, and Life Satisfaction

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Abstract : Little research has been conducted on educational services adapted for twice exceptional students. Within an action research, a cluster grouping was set up in an elementary school in Quebec, bringing together gifted or doubly exceptional (2E) students (n = 11) and students not identified as gifted (n = 8) within a multilevel class (3rd and 4th years). 2E students had either attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (n = 8, including 3 with specific learning disability) or autism spectrum disorder (n = 2). Differentiated instructions strategies were implemented, including the possibility of progressing at their own pace of learning, independent study or research projects, flexible accommodation, tutoring with older students and the development of socio-emotional learning. A specialized educator also supported the teacher in the class for behavioural and socio-affective aspects. Objectives: The study aimed to assess the impacts of the grouping on all students, their academic motivation, and their socio-emotional adaptation. Method: A mixed method was used, combining a qualitative approach with a quantitative approach. Semi-directed interviews were conducted with students (N = 18, 4 girls and 14 boys aged 8 to 9) and one of their parents (N = 18) at the end of the school year. Parents and students completed two questionnaires at the beginning and end of the school year: the Behavior Assessment System for Children-3, children or parents versions (BASC-3, Reynolds and Kampus, 2015) and the Academic Motivation in Education (Vallerand et al., 1993). Parents also completed the Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 1994, adapted by Fenouillet et al., 2014) comprising three domains (school, friendships, and motivation). Mixed thematic analyzes were carried out on the data from the interviews using the N'Vivo software. Related-samples Wilcoxon rank-sums tests were conducted for the data from the questionnaires. Results: Different themes emerge from the students' comments, including a positive impact on school motivation or attitude toward school, improved school results, reduction of their behavioural difficulties and improvement of their social relations. These remarks were more frequent among 2E students. Most 2E students also noted an improvement in their academic performance. Most parents reported improvements in attitudes toward school and reductions in disruptive behaviours in the classroom. Some parents also observed changes in behaviours at home or in the socio-emotional well-being of their children, here again, particularly parents of 2E children. Analysis of questionnaires revealed significant differences at the end of the school year, more specifically pertaining to extrinsic motivation identified, problems of conduct, attention, emotional self-control, executive functioning, negative emotions, functional deficiencies, and satisfaction regarding friendships. These results indicate that this approach could benefit not only gifted and doubly exceptional students but also students not identified as gifted.

Keywords : Cluster grouping, elementary school, giftedness, mixed methods, twice exceptional students

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