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Qualitative Evaluation of a Positive Youth Development Program for Low-achieving Students: Findings based on Focus Groups

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Abstract: This paper presents a qualitative evaluation study using focus group methodology to examine the subjective experience and perceived benefits of low-achieving secondary school students who joined the Tier 2 Program of the Project P.A.T.H.S. in Hong Kong. A total of 67 students from eight focus groups participated in the study. Results showed that the students perceived the Tier 2 Program positively as shown by the descriptors they used to describe the Program and the related experience. The students also became more resilient and confident after joining the Program, and many of them showed improvement in teamwork and cooperation with their classmates. The Program enhanced students' relationships with peers, teachers and family members, and they became passionate and motivated to serve the deprived community, especially the elderly. Finally, the students learned to use some constructive ways to resolve conflicts and showed more respect for others. The present study provides evidence on the effectiveness of the positive youth development program in nurturing the holistic development of Chinese adolescents with greater psychosocial needs.

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Introduction

Students' academic underachievement is always linked with problem behaviors. There is empirical evidence that students with poorer academic performance have higher risks of exhibiting internalizing (e.g., depression, anxiety, and withdrawal) and externalizing behavioral outcomes such as delinquency, antisocial behaviors, and bullying in schools (1-3). The effects are amplified when the secondary schools are stratified into different school bands based on the academic standards of the students. With more resources allocated to the schools with more low school achievers, teachers and social workers pay great effort in handling the students' problem behaviors, dealing with their attendance problems, resolving the peer conflicts among students and boosting their academic motivation.

With specific reference to Hong Kong, the present social service orientation is primarily geared towards solving the "problems" of students with low achievement. The "problem" focused orientation generates four fundamental issues. First, it is not effective to remedy the problems and reduce the students' misbehaviors if only remedial measures are offered. There is a common Chinese saying of "*tou tong yi tou, jiao tong yi jiao*" (treat the head when the head aches, treat the foot when the foot hurts) which aptly reflects the limitation of the reactive approach in dealing with adolescent problem behaviors. Second, students are easily labelled as inattentive, misbehaved and problematic, which further lowers their satisfaction with schools and worsens their learning motivation and behaviors (4). Third, teachers and school personnel may need to pay extra effort in resolving teacher-student conflicts that may arise when handling the students' problem behaviors (5), especially when the schools strongly emphasize the enforcement of school regulations and disciplinary practice. Last but not least, the normal developmental needs of the students are ignored. Regardless of their academic performance, adolescents have their normative developmental needs to search for self-identity and recognition by others, build up connections with others and the outside world, and participate in the groups and communities they belong to (6). These are the essential developmental tasks for adolescents to step towards adulthood. Hence, the emphasis of the adolescent problems does not truly respond to the developmental needs of the adolescents.

In recent years, social scientists, educators and social workers have advocated for the use of strengths-based perspective rather than the problem-based perspective in helping needy students (7-9). Saleebey (9) suggested that the strengths perspective is a holistic approach that focuses on the plasticity, resilience and empowerment of an individual in his/her interaction with the environment. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (10) explicitly claimed that "our message is to remind our field that psychology is not just the study of pathology, weakness, and damage; it is also the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is broken; it is nurturing what is best" (p. 7). Shek and Leung (8) also used the analogy of the Western medicine and Chinese medicine to illustrate the importance of building the assets and competencies of an individual in dealing with adversities and challenges. Hence, rather than solely emphasizing the pathology-oriented clinical intervention approach to solve the adolescent behavioral problems, it is more strategic to employ the strengths-based developmental programs to promote competencies and potential of adolescents with greater psychosocial needs.

Against this background, the Project P.A.T.H.S. (Positive Adolescent Training through Holistic Social Programmes) adopting the positive youth development approach was developed to implement a large-scale positive youth development program for junior secondary school students (i.e., Grades 7 to 9) in Hong Kong. There are two tiers in the Project. While the Tier 1 Program makes use of a structural universal curriculum to enhance

the interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies of all junior secondary school students, the Tier 2 Program targets the students with greater psychosocial needs and utilizes more diverse intervention strategies and techniques in the program design such as adventure-based counseling, voluntary services, social exposure programs, etc. Undoubtedly, the Tier 2 Program also adheres to the positive youth development paradigm to enhance the positive development of the students.

This study examined the effectiveness of a Tier 2 Program delivered to a group of low-achieving students in a secondary school in Hong Kong. The objectives of the Tier 2 Program were: (i) to enhance the psychosocial competencies of the students, and (ii) to increase the exposure of the students. The Program covered eight sessions. Apart from the class activities that aimed at building the cohesion and psychosocial competence of the students, there were different outdoor activities such as day camps, adventure-based counseling programs, volunteer services, and exposure programs, etc. In the Tier 2 Program conducted in 2013-2014, canoeing was organized to build up resilience and courage of the students. Besides, a volunteer service of visiting the single elderly living in the rural areas was designed. Based on the interests of the students, two interest-learning workshops, coffee making and African drum (Djembe), were conducted. Finally, an award presentation ceremony was organized to reward and recognize the efforts and participation of the students.

In the Tier 2 Program held in 2014-2015, a day camp was organized to enhance the team spirit and cohesion among the students. Canoeing was conducted as this activity provided a good platform to develop adolescent resilience and psychosocial competence. Furthermore, a "city-hunt" adventure-based counseling program was organized to enhance the social exposure, persistence, resilience and cooperation among the students. The contents of the Program in each cohort are shown in Table 1. The activities were modified in accordance to the psychosocial needs of the students and recommendations from the school social workers and teachers. In order to make the Program more accessible and attractive, some of the programs were conducted during the school days. Social workers from the non-governmental organization were responsible for conducting the programs and leading the groups. As the Project P.A.T.H.S. was financially supported by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, the programs were free of charge.

This study attempted to examine the effectiveness of a Tier 2 Program delivered to a group of low-achieving students in a secondary school. Two cohorts, 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, of participants were invited to share their views and experiences after joining the Project respectively. A qualitative study of focus group was employed as the research strategy due to four reasons. First, focus group interview effectively taps the perceptions, feelings and opinions of the participants on the programs they involve (11). Second, the group-based format allows the participants to interact with each other and share their experiences together (12). This method is typically welcomed by adolescents as they can communicate with others and share their views in a group. Third, qualitative data would provide rich information for researchers to understand the views and perceptions of the participants, including their subjective experience, the change process, and the rationale behind their choices. Last but not least, many low-achieving students are quite reluctant to fill in the questionnaire due to their constraints of comprehending the statements and questions. Hence, focus group interviews compensate the limitations of using the paper-and-pencil questionnaire.

Method

Participants and Procedures

The participants were Secondary 2 students (Grade 8) in a Band 3 secondary school and participated in the Tier 2 Program of the Project P.A.T.H.S. during the academic years of 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. In Hong Kong, the secondary schools are categorized into three bands according to their academic achievements, with Band 3 schools enrolling students having the lowest academic performance. As the selected school belongs to the Band 3 category according to their students' academic performance, many students are "regarded" as low school achievers in the competitive educational ecology in Hong Kong.

In the present study, the students came from one class of Secondary 2 to join the Tier 2 Program of Project P.A.T.H.S. so that more flexibility on the arrangement was allowed. Parental consent to join the Project was sought. There were 33 and 32 students joining the programs in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 respectively. The selected school was located in the suburban area near the border of China mainland. Some students were immigrants and a high proportion of them experienced economic disadvantage. Sharing the characteristics with many low school achievers, the students were found to have low motivation to study, low self-confidence and poor interpersonal relationships with others.

All students were invited to participate in the focus groups. Informed consent was obtained from both parents and students. Finally, there were 29 and 28 from the two cohorts to join the focus groups respectively. There were a total of eight focus groups conducted for the evaluation within two years.

In each cohort, four focus groups were arranged at the four corners of the school hall. The teachers and school social workers helped to assign the students to different focus groups. There were around five to eight students in each group. The teachers and social workers did not sit in the group so that the students could talk more freely and openly. Each focus group was conducted by a trained researcher who was the moderator of the focus group. The moderator reminded the students to respect one another and adopt an open attitude to accommodate different views and experiences of the participants. Then the moderator conducted the focus group discussion according to an interview guide (see Appendix 1). The students were encouraged to express their views and opinions in the group. The focus group interviews took approximately one hour to complete. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants, and the verbatim was transcribed by student helpers from a university.

Though the focus group interview is a useful research strategy to collect the views and opinions of the students, there are two main issues that researchers may need to tackle. First, the interview may be dominant by those students who are more expressive and have stronger views on the Project, making the less expressive students feel hesitant to share their views, especially when their views are different from the so-called "dominant" views. Second, as the students came from the same class, the dynamic relationships among the students may easily influence the atmosphere and participation of the students in the focus group. To avoid the issues, the researchers set some rules and etiquette in the discussion (such as allowing each member to share, showing respect for different opinions, and avoiding rude criticism, etc.). These rules and etiquette may help to build up a more open and friendly atmosphere in the discussion. Besides, the school social workers and teachers helped to arrange the students in different focus groups so as to pace down any undesirable dynamic relationships among the students within each group. As all participants were invited to join the focus groups, no students were excluded from participating in the focus group interviews.

Data Analysis

A general qualitative orientation was adopted in this study (13). To interpret the effectiveness of the Tier 2 Program, theme analysis pattern coding was performed. Miles and Huberman

(14) suggested that pattern coding is "a way of grouping those summaries into a small number of sets, themes, or constructs ... it's an analogue to the cluster-analytic and factor-analytic devices use in statistical analysis" (p. 69). Principally, the broad themes were extracted from the transcripts of the verbatim. In addition, as the Tier 2 Program aims at enhancing the psychosocial competencies of the students, the perceived benefits were further matched with the 15 positive youth development constructs, namely bonding, resilience, cognitive competence, emotional competence, moral competence, behavioral competence, social competence, spirituality, beliefs in the future, clear and positive identity, self-determination, self-efficacy, prosocial involvement, prosocial norms and recognition for positive behavior (15).

As far as the effectiveness of the Tier 2 Program is concerned, this paper mainly presents the qualitative findings of the comments on the program effectiveness (i.e., Part 3 of the interview guide), as well as the responses of the last question, "If you are invited to use three descriptors to describe the program, what three words will you use?" (Overall comment of Appendix 1). Lastly, the descriptors used by the students to describe the program were categorized into "positive", "neutral" and "negative" responses. This gives us an overview on how the students perceived the Tier 2 Program. The focus group methodology has been used frequently in the project (16).

Results

Table 2 shows the students' responses on the perceived benefits of the Tier 2 Program. Results showed that students perceived positive changes in both intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects. Regarding the intrapersonal qualities, the students expressed that they became more resilient and confident after joining the programs, especially after participating in the adventure-based counseling programs. The paragraph below highlights a narrative extracted from the focus group with the participants of the Tier 2 Program in 2013-2014:

Moderator: Do you have any changes in the program?
Student A: I think I could get rid of my inferiority, and tried new activities.
Moderator: You have more opportunities to try?
Student A: Yes, my confidence increased.
Moderator: Can you elaborate more?
Student A: I have acquired more knowledge, like the canoeing skills.
Moderator: What do you think the program contributes to your development?
Student A: I have tried out my first step in life, canoeing… I haven't tried this before. I can stand up on the canoe.

A new and refreshing experience would help the students build up resilience and confidence when they recognized their potential to overcome difficulties. Besides, the students also showed improvement in problem-solving capacities, built up courage to try new things, and became more conscientious, reflective and mature. Some students expressed that they acquired more knowledge, developed new interests, improved emotional management capacities and recognized the importance of sportsmanship. The paragraph below is another narrative of a participant's experience of the Tier 2 Program in 2014-2015:

Moderator: You've mentioned that you have some improvements. What are they?
Student B: Ah, on engagement. My teammate had some emotional problems...I wanted to fight with him.
Moderator: You wanted to fight with him?
Student B: Yes, fighting, a way to vent my anger.

Moderator: Oh, and then…
Student B: I controlled myself.

Regarding the interpersonal competencies, majority of the participants built up their team spirit and enhanced their cooperation with other teammates. They showed more respect for other people and improved their communication skills. It should be highlighted that the students learned how to resolve conflicts when there was disagreement. The paragraph below is a description of the participants joining the Tier 2 Program in 2014-2015:

Moderator: What did you learn in the "City Hunt"?
Student C: (I) learned to cooperate with those who had conflicts with me.
Moderator: Before that, how did you treat those people with conflicts?
Student C: We used to quarrel all the time.
Student D: They would fight.
Moderator: How about the most serious quarrel you have ever had?
Student C: The most serious one was that the teacher needed to stop us.
Moderator: But now, how did you interact with them?
Student C: Now, I did not use impolite manner to interact with them… I did not use foul language to talk to them.
Moderator: You are friends now.
Student C: Not really friends, but they are not my enemies.

Furthermore, the volunteer service in the Tier 2 Program helped to build up the students' passion and motivation to serve the deprived communities, especially the elderly. They understood more on the situations of the elderly and showed empathy for them. In addition, the students' understanding of the needs of the elderly encouraged them to improve the relationship with their parents and care for their grandparents. The paragraph below is a conversation extracted from a focus group on their perceived benefits from the volunteer service in the Tier 2 Program in 2013-2014:

Moderator: Regarding the whole Program, what is the most positive change that you perceive? Can each of you share your view?
Student E: Yes, the visit to a squatter area makes me respect for the elderly more.
Student F: Care for the elderly.
Moderator: From your point of view, do you have any changes?
Student F: When we visited the elderly, I was touched.
Student G: The elderly, I think the Government should pay more attention to the lives of the elderly.
Moderator: But how did this event help or make changes in you?
Student G: I treat my family members better than before.
Moderator: What are the reasons?
Student G: When I visited the elderly and knew that their children did not take care of them, I think when I grow up, I should not neglect my father and mother.
Moderator: Can we say that you have some reflections after the service?
Student G: Yes, probably.
Student H: When I visited the elderly, I found that their lives were really hard. There were many things that they failed to do... buying food, walking downstairs. There were many things that they failed to do.
Moderator: How did this make impacts on you? That is, how did this experience help you? What did you learn?
Student H: I understood the lives of the elderly more.
Moderator: How did this help you?
Student H: I become more caring.

Last but not least, Table 3 shows the descriptors used by the students to describe the Tier 2 Program of the Project P.A.T.H.S. From the feedback of the students, they were positive towards the Tier 2 Program. Out of 79 descriptors used by the students, 72 were positive attributes of the Program. "Amusing", "exciting", "adventurous", "very good" and "interesting" were the most cited descriptors expressed by the students. Still, some of the students found that the duration of the Project was too short, the Program was not challenging, and a student used the term "suffered" to describe his participation. The negative responses (four out of 79) were far fewer than the positive ones.

Discussion

The current study examined the effectiveness of the Tier 2 Program of the Project P.A.T.H.S. from the perspectives of the low achieving students from a secondary school in Hong Kong, with the students divided into eight groups and surveyed in focus group interviews. Several observations can be highlighted in the study. First, the students had positive views of the Tier 2 Program as illustrated by their sharing of the perceived benefits after joining the Program and the descriptors they used to describe the Program. Second, the students expressed that they became more resilient and confident after joining the Program. They also shared some positive changes in the intrapersonal aspects including cognitive competence, emotional competence, behavioral competence and moral competence. Third, a high proportion of the students showed improvement in team building and cooperation with the classmates. Fourth, the Program also enhanced their relationships with peers, teachers and family members. Fifth, the students learned to use some constructive ways to resolve conflicts and showed more respect for other people. Sixth, the students were passionate and motivated to serve the deprived communities, especially the elderly. They were empathetic to the lives of the elderly, which gave them reflections on their relationships with their parents and grandparents, as well as the roles of the government to help the elderly maintain a higher standard of living.

The findings indicated that a higher proportion of the students perceived improvement of teamwork as well as enhancement of resilience and confidence after joining the Tier 2 Program. This is understandable as the adventure-based counseling was emphasized in the program design. The adventure-based counseling program is deliberately used to induce personal growth and development through experiencing and overcoming different challenging tasks (17,18). Furthermore, both adventure-based counseling and volunteer service required the students to work collaboratively in order to accomplish the tasks (19,20). Hence, the experiential learning processes through group work enhanced the development of resilience, self-confidence and teamwork.

Several theories account for the associations between adolescent academic achievement and problem behaviors, such as the strain theory (21,22), the social development model (23) and the problem behavior theory (24). There are also empirical studies showing that low-achieving students were more emotionally vulnerable and exhibited high risks of behavioral problems (25-27). Nonetheless, the potential, passion and competencies of the students should not be ignored. The qualitative findings from the focus groups are strong reminders that though students had low academic achievement, they were passionate to serve the deprived communities in need and strived to achieve when they were encouraged and motivated. At the same time, the students developed their intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies through their involvement and participation. Furthermore, in the review of the poor family socialization theory and deviant affiliation theory that explain the generation of subculture of adolescents in using violence to resolve conflicts and possessing antisocial attitudes towards authority (3,25,28), the results are encouraging to reveal that students

learned to resolve conflicts positively, observe prosocial norms and improve their relationships with parents and teachers after joining the Tier 2 Program. This provides a strong evidence that positive youth development program serves as a buffer to reduce the detrimental impacts of the negative ecological influences and developmental challenges faced by the adolescents (29,30).

There are theoretical and practical implications of the study. Theoretically, the study adopted the focus group methodology to examine the perceived benefits of a group of low-achieving students after joining a positive youth development program in Hong Kong. This allows the perceptions of the students to be understood and their voice to be heard. The qualitative findings provide thick descriptions and rich content (31) for the assessment of the effectiveness of a positive youth development program on the adolescents with greater psychosocial needs. More importantly, the study shows the importance on the strengths-based perspective in enhancing the positive development of adolescents with greater psychosocial needs, rather than emphasizing on the deficits, problems and misbehaviors of the low-achieving students. A shift of paradigm on the assessment and intervention of the youth program is worthy to be promoted (8).

Practically, the current study provides evidence that positive youth development program is effective in enhancing the intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies of the low-achieving students. Particularly, the adventure-based counseling programs help to build up resilience, self-confidence and enhance the teamwork of the students. Moreover, the volunteer service is effective in building their passion and prosocial involvement in the society and indirectly improving their relationship with their family members. Hence, adventure-based counseling and service learning approaches are encouraged to be adopted in the positive youth development program for adolescents. These findings are consistent with the previous studies (32-36).

There are several limitations of the study. First, the study was based on the qualitative data of the focus groups in one secondary school in Hong Kong. The school environment may be an influential factor to determine the effectiveness of a positive youth development program for low-achieving students. It is advised to replicate the findings based on participants with similar psychosocial needs in different schools. Second, focus group interviews were conducted at the end of the program at one time point. It is encouraged to have ongoing qualitative evaluation in the study to capture the processes of changes during the intervention. Third, the students may need more time to warm up in the focus group discussion. They did not get used to expressing their feelings and elaborating their ideas publicly in a group. The moderators may need to give more encouragement in the group and adequate time for them to express themselves. Fourth, peer dynamics did influence the focus group discussion. Some students disturbed the discussion frequently. The moderators should be aware of the influence and minimize the disturbance among the students. Fifth, peer checking and member checking were not performed due to the time and manpower constraints, which may reduce the creditability of the study (13). Last but not least, more qualitative evaluation strategies such as in-depth individual interviews are suggested to solicit the subjective experiences of the students.

Despite the limitations, the current study revealed the subjective experiences and perceived benefits of a positive youth development program from a group of low-achieving students in Hong Kong. As Werner and Smith's (37) reminder that "the life stories of the resilient youngsters now grown into adulthood teach us that competence, confidence, and caring can flourish, even under adverse circumstances…From odds successfully overcome springs hope – a gift each of us can share with a child – at home, in the classroom, on the playground, or in the neighborhood" (p. 209), a strengths-based intervention model that nurtures adolescents' competencies and builds their personal assets should be fostered.

Acknowledgements

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Table 1. The content of the Tier 2 Program

	2013-2014	2014-2015
Adventure-based counseling	• Canoeing	• Canoeing • City Hunt (Tsim Sha Tsui and Central)
Volunteer service	• Home visits to the elderly living in the squatter areas	
Experiential exercises and games	• Class activities	• Class activities • Day camp
Interest learning	• Coffee making • African drum (Djembe)	
Recognition for the students' performance	• Finale cum award presentation ceremony	• Finale cum award presentation ceremony

Table 2. Students' responses on their perceived benefits of the Tier 2 Program

Positive Youth Development Construct	Responses	Frequency	Examples of the Narratives
Resilience	Develop resilience	7	• "(the Program) enhances our life skills when facing adversities. Whenever we face difficulties, we may need to overcome them, and fill up with confidence." • "(the Program) increases my confidence in facing adversities, I have reduced my withdrawal behaviors". • "I have learned the meaning of survival…In case you were in the sea, you must row the boat bravely if you want to survive."
Cognitive competence	Improvement of problem-solving capacity	3	• "I can think of a more gentle problem-solving strategy to solve the problem."
	Build up knowledge and skills	5	• "The Program increases my knowledge, for example, the skills in canoeing."
	Become more conscientious in doing things	2	• "(I) must learn to be very conscientious."
	Be more reflective	3	• "I will do my reflections every night."
Behavioral competence	Build up courage to try new things	5	• "I have the opportunity to try new things that I haven't tried before."
	Learn to reserve resources	2	• "I learn to treasure the resources, and do not make any destructions to things."
	Enhance self-management	2	• "I have to take care of myself. In the past, I used to eat outside and it was expensive. Now I learn to save some money to do something meaningful, such as donation."
	Enhance one's interests	2	• "I learn how to canoe and hope that I can continue to learn more. I hope to reach the fourth star grade."
	Gain new experience and have more life exposure	2	• "I have tried out my first step in life, canoeing…I haven't tried this before. I can stand up on the canoe." • "I have more exposure… (I was) a "villager" (a negative connotation meaning ignorant) before."
Clear and positive identity	Increase self-confidence	9	• "I think I have reduced my inferiority. I tried new things." • "When visiting the elderly, I am more confident to initiate chats with them."
	Become more mature	3	• "What makes the largest difference is that my present feelings and personalities are more mature than in the past. Before that I was like "a frog inside a well" (means ignorant). I did not know anything about the

Positive Youth Development Construct	Responses	Frequency	Examples of the Narratives
			squatter area. But now I visited there and know more about it."
Emotional competence	Have better emotional management	1	• "I have the thought to fight as a way to vent my anger… But now I control myself."
Moral competence	Observe sportsmanship	1	• "(I) learn sportsmanship."
Social competence	Improvement in interpersonal communication skills	10	• "When I chatted with the elderly, I learned the communication skills." • "(I learned) the use of language, and how to respond to others… coming from the experience of talking to the elderly." • "I learned to be open-minded when discussing with others, and felt less shy in communication."
	Build up teamwork	32	• "The Project requires teamwork and how you cooperate with others. Just like in canoeing, when others move forward but you move backward, then we will stay at the original place. You have to cooperate with others." • "(We learn to) cooperate as a team. We have experienced a lot together … as a team, (we face) many challenges and difficulties." • "We have few opportunities to accomplish one task with the whole class. And now we do."
	Show respect for others	3	• "(I) learn how to respect for others…When we have quarrels, I learn how to engage them again."
	Improvement in conflict resolution	3	• "(I) learn how to cooperate with those who have conflicts with me". • "Some people will use violence to resolve (conflicts). We will not use it."
Bonding	Build up companionship	4	• "My relationship with my classmates becomes closer. We interact with each other." • "I have more friends."
	Enhance the bonding with family members	5	• "I treat my family members better…When I visited the elderly and knew that their children did not take care of them, I think when I grow up, I should not neglect my father and mother." • "I learn how to please my grandmother. In the past, I used foul language when I talked to my grandma. But now, I will not." • "It is very helpful for my family. I respect for my grandpa and grandma more, and am polite when talking with them. I learn to

Positive Youth Development Construct	Responses	Frequency	Examples of the Narratives
			value them more. When I visited others (the elderly), they were alone. Therefore, I value them (grandparents) more."
	Improve relationship with teachers and peers in school	4	• "I should respect for the teachers and peers. Treasure more people and things around us, and have more interactions with the schoolmates." • "I have better communication with others. Before that, I used to bully on a student, but now I care for him/her."
Prosocial norms	Respect for cultural diversity	3	• "I enjoyed playing African Drum. Others (the players) came from different nations. I learned to respect for them. I was happy with playing with people from other nations." • "I learned not to discriminate against others."
	Respect for the elderly	2	• "The visits to the elderly made me respect for them more."
Prosocial involvement	Become more passionate and motivated to serve others in need	11	• "I learn to care for the poor people in the society. We need to show our concern to them." • "In case I meet someone who are in need, I will help them, for example, giving them some money." • "(We) visited the elderly, made them feel happy. (We) understand more about them, take care of their needs. They will feel our care and concern."
	Understand and show empathy to the elderly	8	• "When I visited the elderly, I found that their lives were really hard. There were many things that they failed to do... buying food, walking downstairs. There were many things that they failed to do… I understood the lives of the elderly more." • "Squatter area…I learned how difficult the lives of the elderly were. There is disparity of the rich and the poor…They have difficulty in buying food." • "When visiting the squatter area, we were exposed to the sunshine, and there were mosquitoes everywhere. You know, the squatters were made of iron, and hence it was very hot inside. The house was hot, and people could not tolerate. The situation is worse in summer when it is 30°C outside, and the house inside would be 40°C. The elderly would have high chance of getting sunstroke…I think the Government is irresponsible. The compensation for the squatter is around $600,000. They could not buy a house with such a small amount of money. They have to wait for the public

Positive Youth Development Construct	Responses	Frequency	Examples of the Narratives
			housing for serval years, and the money would be used up. And they have lived in this area for a long time and have built up affections there. But the Government now wants to redevelop it. The elderly would miss the place very much."

Table 3. Descriptors used by the students to describe the Tier 2 Program

Descriptions	Response			Total
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	
Amusing	12			12
Exciting	9			9
Adventurous	7			7
Very good	7			7
Interesting	6			6
Perfect	5			5
Good	3			3
Quite good	3			3
Creative	2			2
New	2			2
Special	2			2
Learn more	2			2
Happy	2			2
Passionate	1			1
Rich content	1			1
Successful	1			1
Hopeful	1			1
Make a difference	1			1
Unique	1			1
Cheap in price	1			1
Challenging	1			1
Funny	1			1
Beautiful	1			1
Average		1		1
Simple		1		1
Easy		1		1
Too short (duration)			1	1
Suffered			1	1
Not challenging			1	1
Hard			1	1
Total count (N)	**72**	**3**	**4**	**79**
Total Count (%)	**91.14%**	**3.80%**	**5.06%**	**100%**

Appendix 1. Interview Guide of the Focus Group

<u>Experience of students' participation in the program</u>

- How did you realize this program? How did you enroll in the program?
- What were your expectations before you joined the program? From a retrospective view, how far did the program fulfill your expectations?
- In the program, which part did you like the most? Why?
- In the program, which part did you dislike the most? Why?
- Can you share an occasion/event that you think very impressive? What makes this occasion/event to be the most impressive one? What do you learn from the experience?
- Do you think you are involved in the program? Why or why not?

<u>Comments on the program process</u>

- What are your comments on the instructors?
- What are your relationships with the instructors? Do you feel friendly with them?
- Did you know the groupmates before the program?
- Did you have any changes in the relationships with your groupmates? If yes, what are the changes?

<u>Comments on the program effectiveness</u>

- What do you benefit the most from the program?
- Did you have any changes after participating in the program? If yes, what are the changes? What makes you have the changes?
- Do you think the program has helped your development? If yes, what are they?
- Do you think the program has helped your adjustment in your school life? If yes, what are they?

<u>Overall comments</u>

- Overall, what do you appreciate the most in the program?
- Do you have any suggestions on how the program can be improved?
- If you are invited to use three descriptors to describe the program, what three words will you use?