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Developing formative potential when summative assessment dominates

David Carless
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Overview

- Relationships between summative and formative assessment
- The role of context
- Students setting a test paper
- Student drawings research
- Implications for theory and practice



SUMMATIVE (SA) AND FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT (FA)

A background image of a classroom where several young students in blue and white uniforms are standing in a line, looking at a green chalkboard. The board has some faint writing on it. In the foreground, there is a red desk with some papers and a yellow folder.

Two teacher roles: **judging and supporting**

- Judging student performance, especially in summing up achievement (summative assessment)
- Supporting student learning (formative assessment)
- School tests usually need to fulfill both summative and formative roles: tensions

SA/FA relationships

- SA often a barrier to FA but also scope for positive interplay between the two.
- Possibility of developing greater formative potential from processes that might be interpreted by teachers and students as largely summative

Facilitated by ..

- Well-designed tests/assessment which promote cognitive engagement
- Active student involvement
- Focus on mastery as well as performance
- A purposeful cycle of revision and follow-up
- Assessment literacy



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THE ROLE OF CONTEXT AND CULTURE

A background image of a classroom where several students in blue and white uniforms are standing in a line, looking at a chalkboard. The chalkboard has some writing on it, including the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. The students are looking at the board with interest. The classroom has a red desk in the foreground with some papers on it. The overall atmosphere is one of a typical classroom setting.



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From Testing to Productive Student Learning: Implementing Formative Assessment in Confucian- Heritage Settings

David Carless

ROUTLEDGE



History of examinations 中

- Competitive examinations dating to the Han dynasty: Imperial civil service examination system (Keju 科舉) from AD 606 to 1905
- Implementing FA in Chinese settings particularly needs to acknowledge the dominance of tests

國



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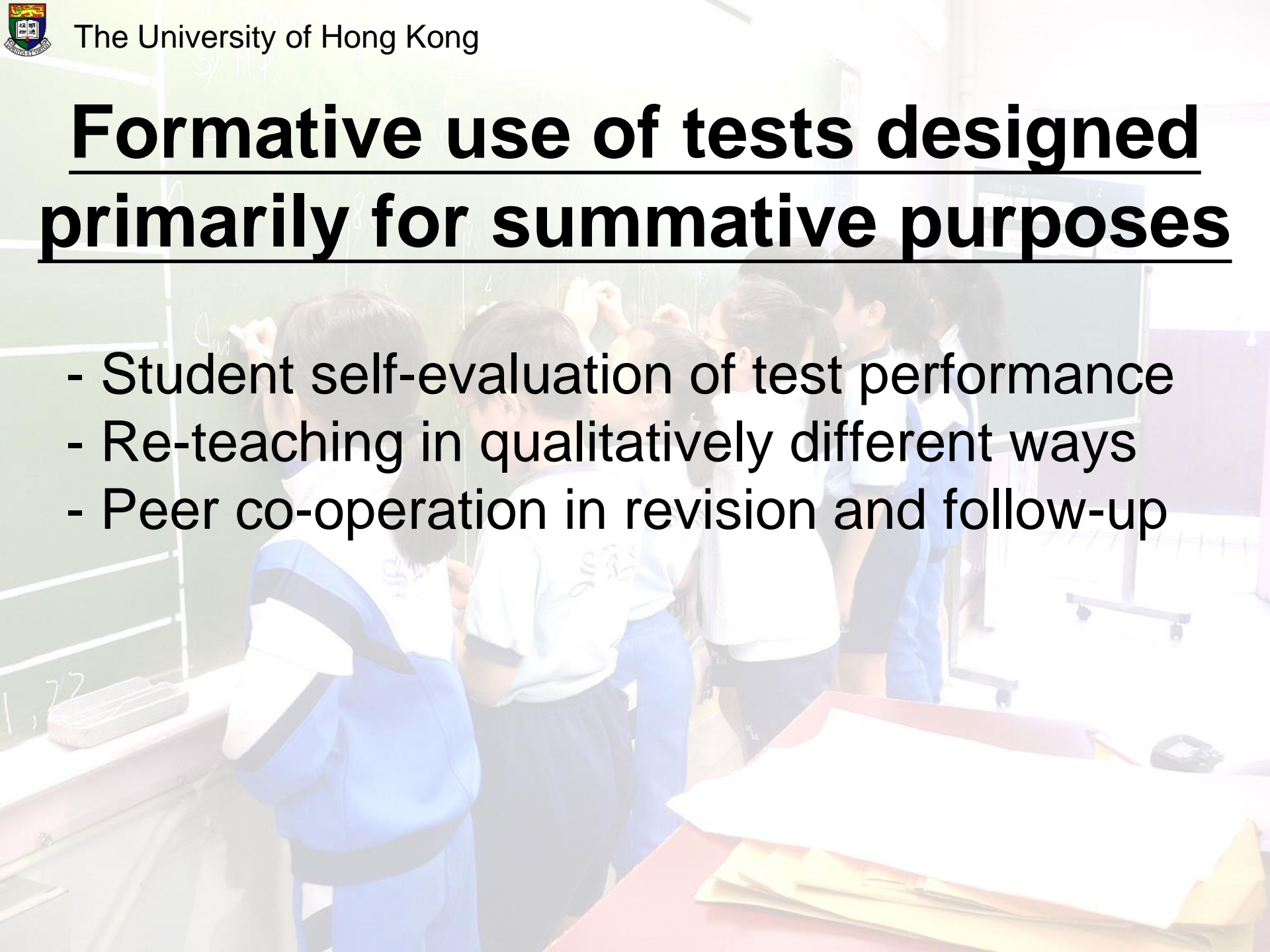
戲
無
益

The sculpture “Play Less” <<戲無益>> is located in Guangzhou Diaosu Park.



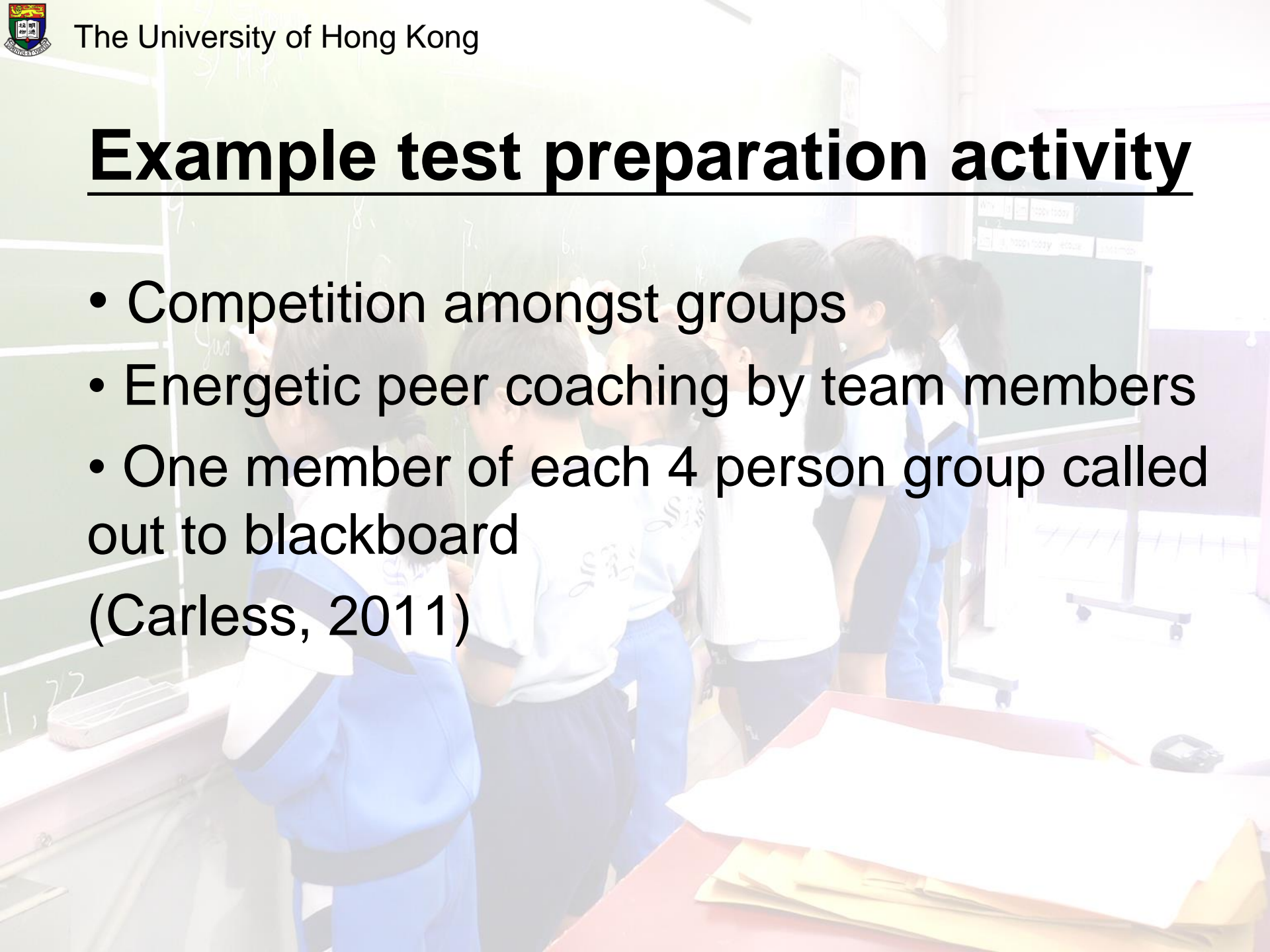
Formative use of tests designed primarily for summative purposes

- Student self-evaluation of test performance
- Re-teaching in qualitatively different ways
- Peer co-operation in revision and follow-up



Example test preparation activity

- Competition amongst groups
- Energetic peer coaching by team members
- One member of each 4 person group called out to blackboard
(Carless, 2011)



2) Group competition
3) M.P. Test Part A

9.

Just

8.

7.

6.

5.

③ Why does Joan like swimming?
Joan likes swimming because...

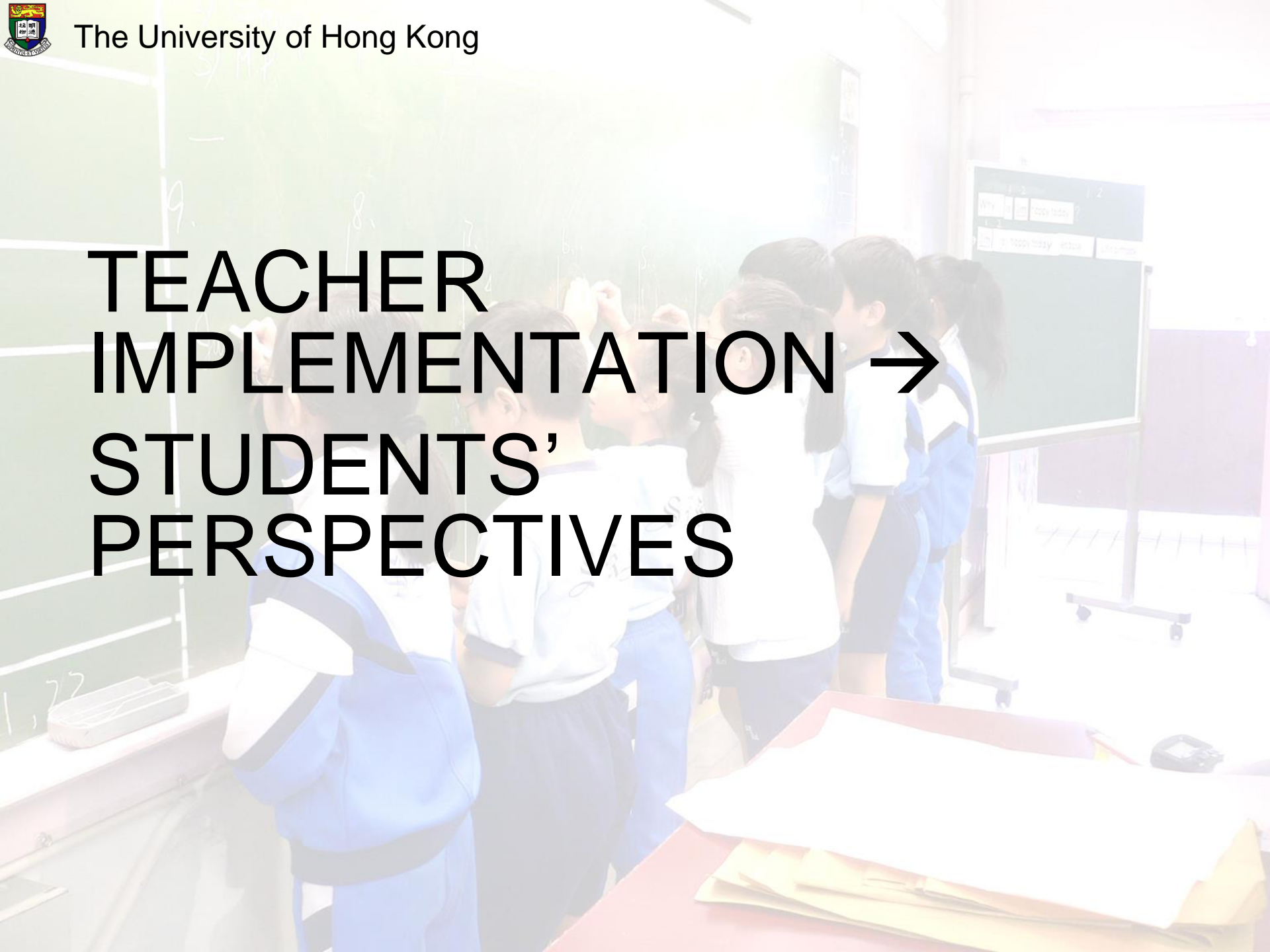
Why is Jim happy today?
Jim is happy today because it's his birthday.

1, 22





TEACHER IMPLEMENTATION → STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES



Students' perceptions

Carless, D. & Lam, R. (2012). The examined life: perspectives of lower primary school students in Hong Kong. *Education 3-13: International journal of primary, elementary and early years education*.



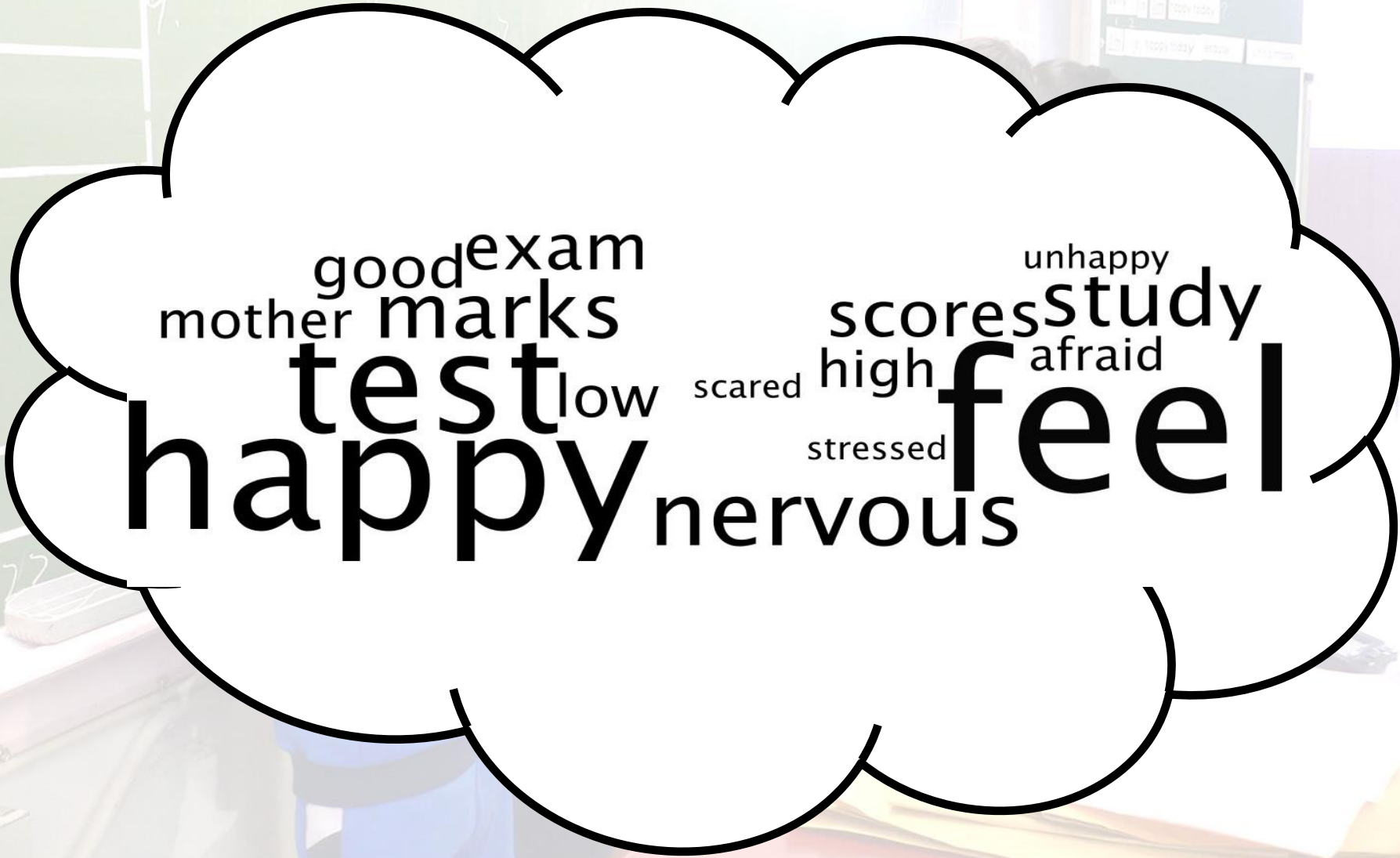
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**Dr. Ricky Lam, Hong Kong
Baptist University**



Key words in captions

A word cloud shaped like a cloud, containing various words related to exams and feelings. The words are arranged in a way that some are larger and more prominent than others.

exam
good
marks
mother
test
low
happy
scores
study
high
scared
stressed
nervous
unhappy
afraid
feel



Before the exam, I feel happy and relaxed. After it, I cry and feel confused.



I gave my test paper to my mother. She was very happy because I got 100. If I got low scores, she will be very angry and will scold me.

Parental involvement

“Whenever I revise my for the exam, my mum is always sitting next to me. Her presence is like a policewoman more than a tutor who can teach me”

(Carless & Lam, 2012)





RECENT RESEARCH 1: DEVELOPMENTAL WORK WITH PRIMARY SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS IN HONG KONG (Carless & Lam, 2013; Lam, 2012)

Active revision

- Students drafting their own test paper to enhance their revision process
- ‘Regular’ 8 year old Hong Kong Chinese students learning EFL/ESL

Preparation of test questions

- Helps students develop an overview of what is being studied (Black et al., 2003)
- Leads to cognitive gains (Rosenshine et al., 1996)
- Generating (and answering) potential test questions promotes successful performance (Foos et al., 1994)



Teaching procedures

- Introduce various types of assessment items, such as MC, filling in blanks.
- Revise key test content
- Asked students to form groups of four and construct their own mock test paper (and a marking scheme)
- Exchange papers

Selected findings

- Teacher reported higher scores (average + 7%) in the test which followed, in comparison with the previous year.
- Some students found it challenging to write MC questions: constructing distracters as well as correct answer
- Students found it novel and fun
- Student: “I feel so proud I can set a test paper for my classmates.”

Summary of the practice

- Teacher built on student desire for high test marks by arranging a revision task with students generating test questions.
- Students develop some ownership of the test preparation process, participants rather than just recipients



RECENT RESEARCH 2: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN HUBEI (Xiao & Carless, 2013)



**Yangyu Xiao (Shirley), PhD student
University of Hong Kong**



Research prompt

Draw a picture of English assessment based on your own understandings, experiences and feelings, and include an explanatory caption

29 students (16-17 y.o) generated 68 pictures

Key themes

Affective responses

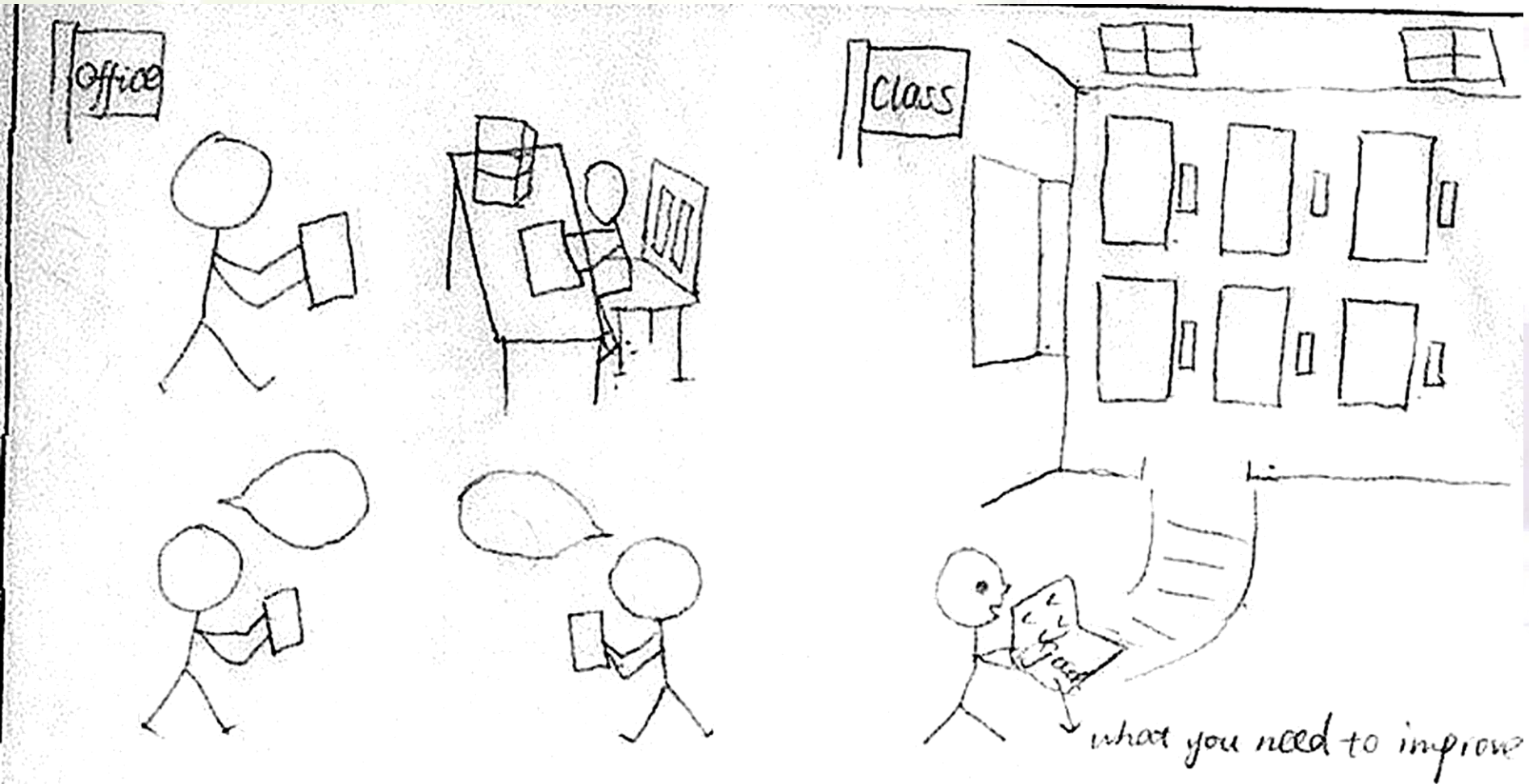
- 21 negative, 14 positive

Summative aspects

- Test results, procedures, limitations

Formative potential

- Teacher support
- Peer feedback
- Student follow-up

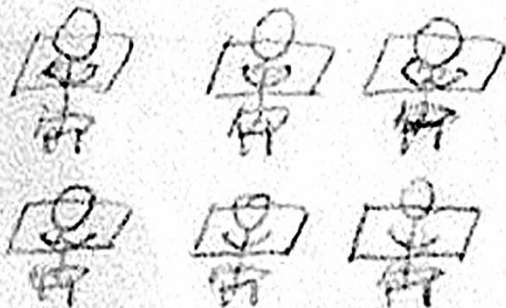


When I finished the exercises, the teacher checked my homework, made comments and communicated with me face to face. Afterwards, I am more aware of what I need to improve most and I will be motivated for future study.

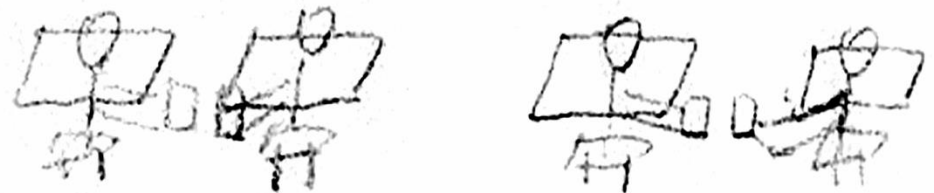
DICTATION TIME

Unit 4

1.
2.
3.



CORRECT FOR
DESKMATE



Peer dictation is an original way for students to assess themselves. It can help improve student-student communication. It is great, but so hard!



I got a lot wrong in dictation. Textbooks are important and I need to digest them.

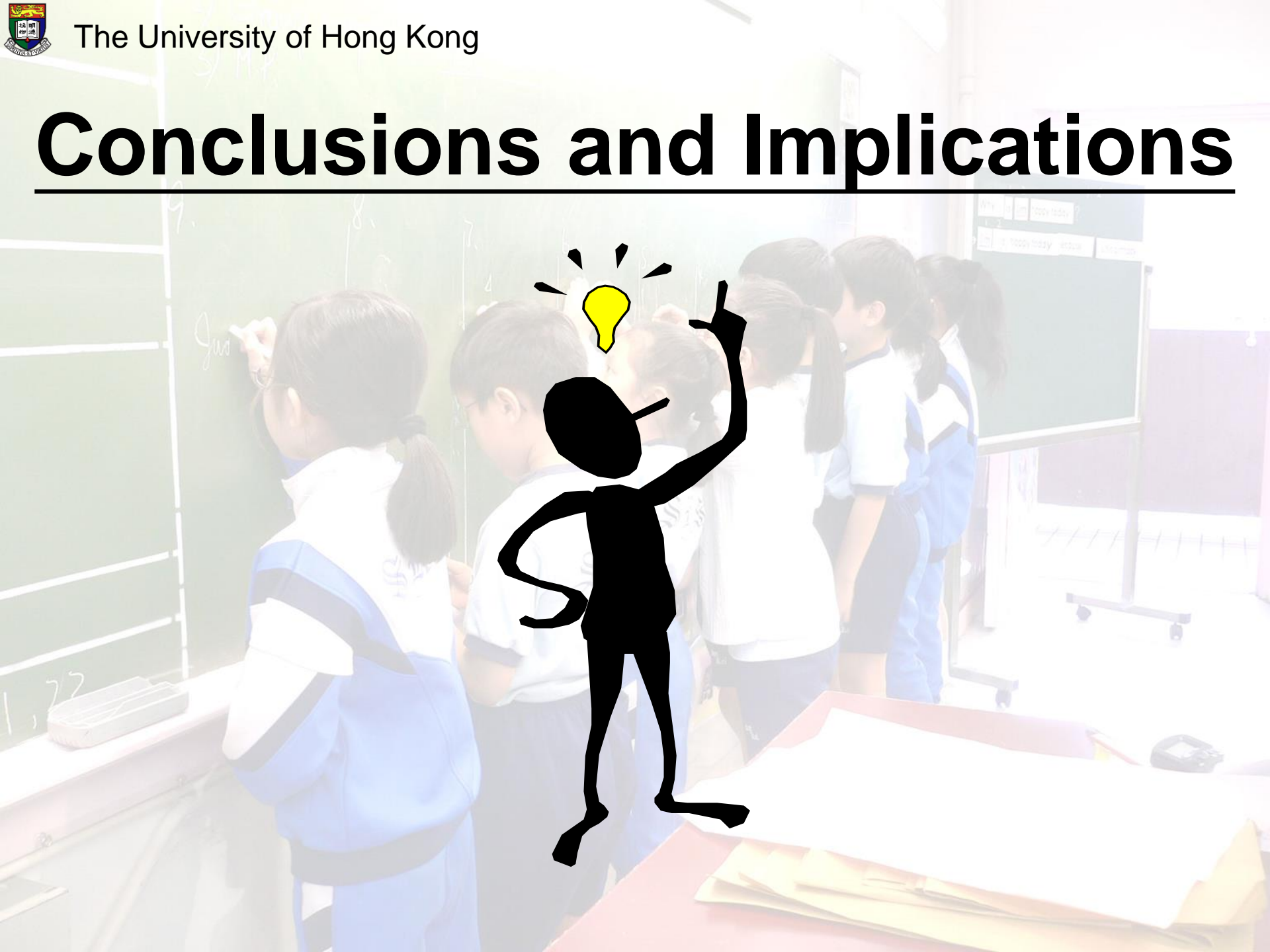
Student challenges

- Stating that they planned to follow-up, rather than actually following through
- Finding time/energy to remediate learning difficulties when faced with new content or tasks
- Memorization to boost marks rather than genuine long-term learning



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Conclusions and Implications



Contextually grounded formative assessment practices

- Acknowledging dominance of testing and the existing practices / beliefs of teachers, whilst bringing some formative potential into summative assessment practices (Carless, 2011)

Restricted and extended FA

Restricted – a pragmatic, diluted version; emphasis on FA within SA

Extended – a more ambitious, extended version; greater emphasis on student autonomy and direction of own learning

Implications for theory

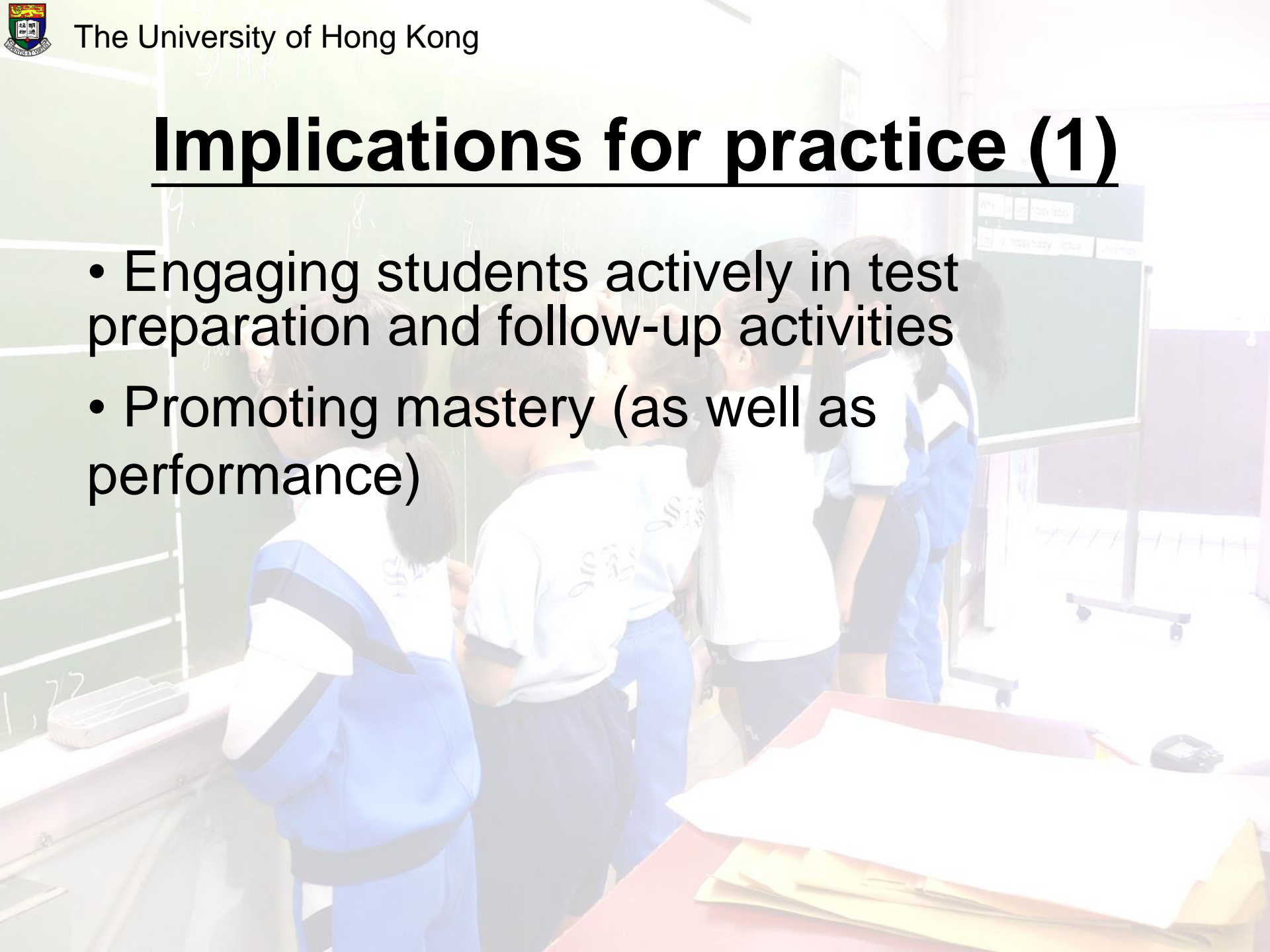
- A continuum of enacted formative assessment practice

Restricted <-----> Extended FA

(Carless, 2011, chapter 5)

Implications for practice (1)

- Engaging students actively in test preparation and follow-up activities
- Promoting mastery (as well as performance)



Implications for practice (2)

- Key role of teacher in inducting students into rules of the (assessment and learning) game
- E.g. teach students how to revise, how to learn, how to use feedback
- Activate the students as users of assessment information





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THANK YOU



