

Recent Dissertation Research in Gifted Studies

Roeper Review Dissertation Section Editor, Judith A. Margison

If interested in submitting a dissertation abstract, please send a copy of the abstract (200-300 words in length) with a brief biographical statement (50 words in length) to Judith Margison, McGill University, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, 3700 McTavish Street, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H3A 1Y2 or to judith.margison@mail.mcgill.ca

Portrait Of An Inspirational Teacher Of The Gifted: A Story To Tell, A Willingness To Be Heard

Janneke Frank (2006)
University of Calgary

The purpose of this interpretive inquiry was to examine and depict the lived experience of becoming or being an inspirational teacher of gifted learners and apply Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD) to further understand the phenomenon. The study was directly concerned with the specific personality and emotional characteristics, competencies, and behaviors of one teacher of gifted secondary students who was identified as inspirational by school administration.

To capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience, the teacher's story was presented as a portrait. Observations, interviews, and document analysis were conducted. Qualitative methodology was used to analyze and describe the phenomenon of being an inspirational teacher of gifted learners and how this was understood from the perspective of the teacher, students, and parents.

There has been no previous research that explores the application of TPD to the personality structure of teachers of gifted students. The findings in this study indicate the strength of the theory and its application to the inspirational teacher of gifted students exists in its provision of a context within which to understand multilevel emotional and moral development, personal growth, inner experience, and the creative personality. The inquiry examined the essence of an inspirational teacher and the essential components of inspirational teaching (a) through the lens of the teacher effectiveness literature in gifted education, and (b) through the

lens of TPD with a specific focus on the concepts of dynamisms and developmental potential.

The theory's moral lens presented a view of an inspirational teacher of the gifted that otherwise would be invisible. This study found the teacher to be an authentic individual, mindfully involved in an inescapably moral undertaking in his pedagogical endeavor, indicative of his advanced developmental potential. For him, moral educational practice was the goal.

This inquiry contributes to the development of a more composite picture of an inspirational teacher of gifted students by applying TPD to examine the phenomenon and by using qualitative methodology to move beyond the competency list approach in the teacher effectiveness literature in gifted education.

Janneke Frank recently completed her PhD in Gifted Education at the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Her research centered on teacher effectiveness in gifted education, specifically exploring inspirational teachers of gifted students. She has extensive experience as a teacher and administrator in Kindergarten to grade 12 schools that offer the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program. Her passionate advocacy for gifted students inspires her work as a private consultant in gifted education. E-mail: jmafrank@ucalgary.ca