

Recent Dissertation Research in Gifted Studies

Roeper Review Dissertation Section Editor, Judith Margison

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Unlocking the GATE: A Qualitative Study of Two Self-Contained Gifted Classes

Robin Linn-Cohen (2003)
University of Illinois,
Champaign-Urbana

The main purpose of this qualitative study was to examine and describe the differentiation strategies implemented in self-contained, fourth- and fifth-grade gifted classrooms to challenge identified gifted and talented students. The unit of study was the 2 self-contained GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) classes at an elementary school in California. This study explored teacher understanding of cognitive challenge and curriculum differentiation in relation to their pedagogy. It also investigated factors influencing gifted teachers' practices in, and the identified gifted students' perceptions of, a self-contained program. Case study data was used to document the interactions between teachers and students and between peers to capture the type of teaching and learning that occurs in a self-contained gifted program in hopes of stimulating conversation about the optimal educational setting for identified gifted children and the best ways to meet their academic and social-emotional needs. The concept of ascending intellectual demand from the Parallel Curriculum Model was used as the conceptual framework for analyzing challenge in the classroom.

Robin Linn-Cohen earned a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2003. She currently works at Northwestern University as an assistant director at the Center for Talent Development and as the Director of Undergraduate Teacher Education. Her research interests surround differentiated instruction, prescribed standards, and standardized testing.
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An Examination of Enrichment Program Participation: A Cross-Case Study Comparison

Sarah A. Feuerbacher (2004)
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The U.S. Department of Education (1993) addressed the "quiet crisis" in education experienced by gifted students due to a lack of appropriate curriculum and opportunities, particularly for economically disadvantaged students. In response to the need, this study sampled economically disadvantaged gifted students who discontinued or continued their participation in an enrichment program. Through a cross-case study analysis, the results showed differences in characteristics, intrapersonal catalysts, and environmental catalysts between the former and current participants. The findings offer researchers, practitioners, and the literature longitudinal effects of an enrichment program on economically disadvantaged gifted students, knowledge of catalysts that affect their participation, and various factors affecting participation dropout so that strategies can be created to promote retention in the enrichment program.

Sarah Feuerbacher holds a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and a BA and LMSW in Social Work from Baylor University. She currently practices as a Battering Intervention and Prevention Program (BIPP) Intake Specialist/Counselor at Hope's Door in Plano, TX. In addition, she serves as an associate faculty member at Collin County Community College.
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Cultural Influence on Creativity: The Relationship Between Creativity and Confucianism

Kyung Hee Kim (2004)
University of Georgia

With the passing of the Korean government's gifted education act (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2003), fostering creativity, especially in mathematics and science, has come to the forefront as an important element in the future of Korea's economic prosperity in the global economy.

According to M. Csikszentmihalyi (1988), creativity is a very complex interaction among a person, a field, and a culture. In keeping with this approach, a look at Asian culture in relation to its impact on creativity is in order. Although people may vary in their native capacity for creativity, it is in the individual's interaction with the macrocosm where creative expression can be found.

In East Asian cultures, including Korea, Confucianism is the core of the cultural framework. Therefore, this study explored the Four Principles of Confucianism (G. Chen & J. Chung, 1994), and how they compare to creativity research to discover how East Asian culture influences creativity. In order to investigate the relationship between adherence to Confucianism and creativity, 184 Korean educators' scores on a measure of Confucianism (Eastern-Western Perspective Scale) were compared with their scores on a measure of creativity (Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking-Figural).

This study found that some elements of Confucianism, mainly Obedience and Hierarchy, Gender Inequality, Conformity, and Suppression of Expression, present cultural blocks to creativity. Further, when creativity is broken into the two types of Innovative and Adaptive (M. Kirton, 1976), Confucianism is found to be more negatively related to the Adaptive type than the Innovative type. This Adaptive type consists of Creative Strengths, Abstractness of Titles, and Elaboration.

The best creative techniques or the strongest creative personality cannot compensate for a culture that crushes creativity. Creative growth demands that we adapt our rigid boundaries of gender roles, conformity, and hierarchy into a creativity-friendly environment. Only through a self-evaluation of our culture, the elements that are blocking our populace, and the construction of more fertile creative soil can we lead our students to new levels of creative achievement.

Kyung Hee Kim completed her doctorate at the University of Georgia in 2004. She has worked at the Center for Test Scoring and Reporting Services and at the Torrance Center. She is currently the Coordinator of International Programs at the Torrance Center for Creativity and Talent Development. Her research interests are in creativity assessment and nurturing creativity.
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